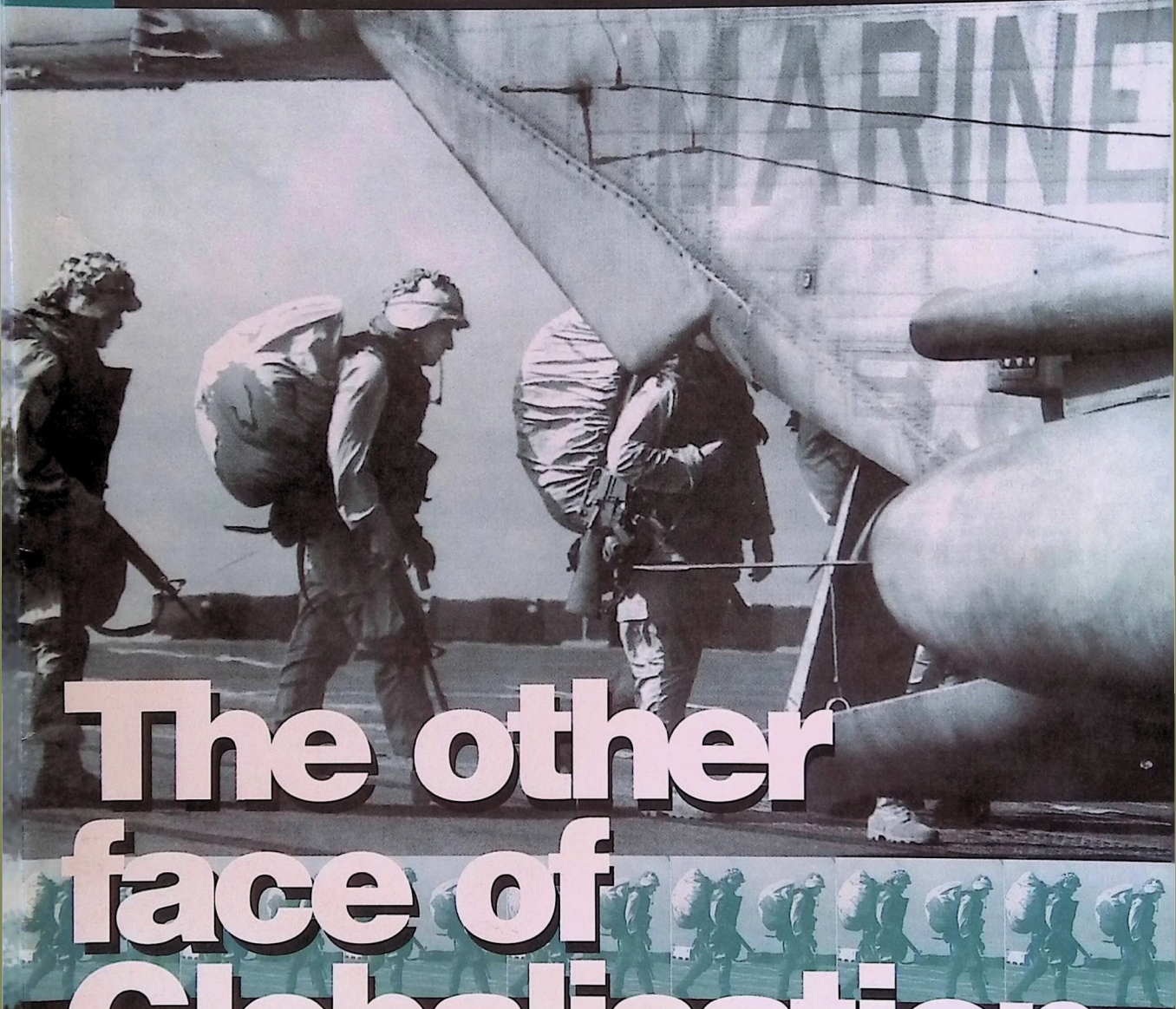


RESISTANCE

IRELANDS SOCIALIST MAGAZINE

ISSUE - 4

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EDITORIAL

The other face of globalisation

The war in Afghanistan, the third major war in just ten years, has reminded us that war is a constant part of the system we live in. The Gulf War and the Balkan War saw thousands of lives lost over resources and keeping the political balance that western states wanted. This war sees the same motives resurface but with greater potential to spill over into more global conflict. War, as a Prussian general of the nineteenth century said, is the continuation of politics by other means.

Yet our rulers have tried to convince us otherwise. In the heyday of neoliberalism in the 1990s, Francis Fukuyama, the guru of the "worldwide liberal revolution", believed that western capitalist societies would be "too comfortable" for war. While there might be a few skirmishes on the way, most societies would join the long journey to market modernity. History itself had ended.

The war in Afghanistan though has shown in brutal fashion that globalisation is not only about Nike runners and McDonalds but also involves Daisycutters and the bombing of villages full of starving people. Oil resources are fought over and competition is about brute dominance. Bin Laden may be the pretext, but the oil pipe-lines of the Caspian region is the booty.

War takes people's understanding to a new level. When we see a US-backed Northern Alliance soldier kicking a dead body or Afghans trying to survive the winter by eating grass, the outrage of war comes home. This shocking violation of humanity is carried out not by deranged individuals but whole governments, collections of leaders who lay claim to civilised values. War shows that global capitalism, for all its pretence to be a freewheeling enterprise system, works through states. The Pentagon, when the chips are down, counts for a lot more than Goldman-Sachs or Bill Gates. States always protect their capitals against rival capitals. When things threaten to destabilise the workings of their corporations, they will engage in all-out war. Imperialism, as socialists have long remarked, is the process of this rivalry and an outgrowth of capitalist competition. Today we are seeing the imperialist face of globalisation.

Of course Bush and Blair, like rulers in previous wars, dress it up very differently. This is a war on terrorism. But their ideological camouflage brings with it a host of problems. After the Gulf War, the supposed enemy Hussein remained in power and may yet become a new target in this war. Their stated war aim – to get Bin Laden – still has not been fulfilled. The Northern Alliance is inherently unstable and, for all their protectors' sophisticated weaponry, Mullah Omar can escape on a motorbike.

War takes things to a new level for those that wage it. The stakes are higher and the risks far greater than when capitalism does business as usual. The US has roped in the shakiest coalition which threatens to unravel at every turn – India and Pakistan being the most recent fall out. As casualties in Afghanistan exceed those of the Twin Towers, the ideological justification for the war wears thin. Add to that differences within the US administration about whether to escalate the war and to take on Iraq and we see further tensions caused by the war itself. The US is caught up in a train of events that can easily spiral out of control.

The US, for all its economic weight, is not as all-powerful as it often seems. As the war was being declared, the most serious recession for half a century was beginning. Even if commentators are talking them down, the signs of the recession – falling profitability, the gap between stock exchange prices and the real economy and deflation – have punctured confidence in the system itself. Even before that, US-led globalisation was being seriously challenged by an international anticapitalist movement. For the

first time in twenty years, governments and the IMF were forced to defend their capitalist market system with tear gas and police lines.

But the war has also been a decisive moment for the anti-capitalist movement. Many groupings, individuals and socialists have weighed in fully behind the anti-war movement and made the connections between capitalism and war. However, others have been pushed aside by events. Some believed that neoliberalism was all-powerful, that the power of multinationals bypassed states and that, in the post-industrial world, imperialist wars were a thing of the past. Some groups like the influential ATTAC movement believed that the answer was to reform the institutions rather than capitalism itself, and so they had little to say when war was declared.

War forces people to take sides. The argument that Bush and Bin Laden are twin terrorists may seem plausible as an abstract idea, but such equivocation makes no sense when at the receiving end of an F-14 Tomcat in Afghanistan or confronted by an Israeli tank on the West Bank. Equally, the spectacle of an international US-led law court putting Bin Laden on trial – the logic of seeing Islamic terrorism as the enemy – would only humiliate further the victims of US foreign policy and be a resounding reinforcement of US hegemony.

Naomi Klein, often the sharpest expression of the anti-capitalist movement, has been critical of the war and linked the global market to military posturing – McWorld against Jihad. At one level this seems to sum up the callous neoliberal agenda against the desperate terrorist attack on New York. But it also implies that both forces are as bad as, or even equal to, each other. In a recent article she has implied that both US Cold War nostalgia and Bin Laden are attempting to reinvent history and return to epic narratives.

War is not just about ideology. Ideas may appear to have the same weight but in reality there is no comparison between US economic and military might and all the Islamic forces put together. The threat to US security and oil is a far more fundamental motive for the war than are the ideas of Islam or Bin Laden. This is not the first time that, for Klein, the material world recedes behind ideology. She exposed brilliantly the weight of lifestyle branding in her best seller *No Logo* but she also believed that capitalism no longer depended on material production. With branding came, she claimed, the "weightless economy". In many ways this view was a radical counterpart to the hype around the new economy – the very bubble that had begun to burst even before September 11.

Wars bring us sharply back to the materiality of things. This war has to be seen for what it is – a fight for US dominance in the region. It is about markets, about oil and about profit flows. It involves the putting down of any challenge from states hostile to the US. The horrific amount of deaths reminds us of the seriousness of Bush's intent: no anti-capitalist can afford to be misled by the rhetoric of the war on terrorism. The next few months may put resolute opposition to this war to further tests.

Marnie Holborow

Two days of meetings and forums on the politics of revolution

Students & REVOLUTION

Chris Harman (Author of *The Economics of the Madhouse*),
Lindsey German (Author of *Sex, Class and Socialism*), **Kieran Allen** (Sociology Lecturer UCD)

Goldsmith Hall, Trinity College Dublin, Pearse Street



Friday Feb 22nd & Saturday Feb 23rd

Seattle...Genoa...Mexico...South Korea... **Argentina...**

NOTES

Sellafield MOX Plant

Despite legal challenges, the MOX plant will proceed at Sellafield. The Irish government's hope that the UN maritime court, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, would scupper the plans proved unfounded. Instead British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. (BNFL) was given the green light, subject to adequate safety precautions being in place, to proceed with MOX. It is precisely BNFL's record on safety, and the inability of the British government to monitor it adequately, that makes the plant so dangerous. A report in 2000 revealed:

- The deliberate falsification of checks on nuclear fuels
- Inadequate safety structures
- Minimal or non-existent training for staff.

Of the 28 recommendations made in this report, very few have been met.

Large sums of money spent on PR every year have not been enough to hide Sellafield's abysmal safety record. In 1957 a fire at Windscale, as it was originally known, caused the release of large amounts of radioactive energy. Since then, there has been a litany of leaks and explosions which

BNFL have tried to play down.

An EU report in October last year on *Possible toxic effects from the Nuclear Reprocessing Plants in Sellafield and Cap de la Hague (France)* claimed that some emissions from Sellafield had caused the release of radiation doses that breached recommended EU levels. It also claimed that an accident there would cause more damage than the Chernobyl disaster.

The 8 million litres of nuclear waste discharged into the Irish Sea every day has caused that stretch of water to become the most radioactively contaminated in the world. All marine life is affected. The health of the surrounding population on both sides of the sea has also seriously suffered. Incidents of childhood leukaemia near Sellafield have increased ten-fold compared to the rest of Britain. Meanwhile in County Louth, just 100 miles from the plant, thirteen people die every month from cancer. The National Cancer Register shows the rate of cancer in Louth continually running at 14% above the national average.



Amazingly, despite the clear danger caused by the continued existence of this nuclear nightmare, the EU, the UN and the courts have failed to shut it down. At the end of the day governments like our own, while putting up a good show of opposition, will not risk rocking the boat too much. They have accepted the 'reality' of nuclear power and weapons and after all, only for huge protests, we would have a nuclear plant of our own at Carnsore Point.

Given the mass opposition that exists, and the enormity of the health risk Sellafield poses, it is that type of campaign that needs to be replicated today on both sides of the Irish Sea. Campaigners travelled to Sellafield before Christmas and blockaded the plant for a time. Further demonstrations are being organised in Dublin and a real movement against the plant is being mobilised.

The anti war movement in Ireland

The response to September 11 by the ruling class across the world has been both violent and repressive. In contrast to our rulers, millions of ordinary people have responded in an inspirational manner determined to voice their opposition to Bush and Blair's terror. Huge anti-war rallies took place internationally when the bombing of Afghanistan began, while in Ireland local anti-war groups were set up with remarkable success involving groups and individuals, many of whom had never been in protest movements before. Over 3000 attended the first national anti-war demo in Dublin and almost 2000 took to the streets on Dec 1st when, according to many around the left, the war was over. The demonstrations reflected the diversity of the movement with teachers, nurses, doctors and students marching against the war alongside groups from Sligo, Mullingar, Clonakilty, Derry and many other places around the country.

Within the anti-war movement (AWM) itself the majority of activists rightly condemned 11 September and agreed that the message needed to be kept clear—stop the war. Suggestions of linking the "stop the war" slogan to one for ending terrorism were held by many. For instance, *New Internationalist* talked of the

'twin terrors' confronting the world. This argument also found an echo on the left. The Socialist Party, while taking part in the anti-war movement, wanted to focus both on Bush and Islamic terrorism for fear of upsetting their potential voters. But the twin terror argument is wrong. Bush and the terror of the US military dwarfs Bin Laden's violence.

The Labour Party, aside from Michael D Higgins, was stunning in its silence while Sinn Féin leaders refused to publicly oppose the war despite the fact that many of the genuine left-wingers in the party joined the anti-war protests. The Niall O'Dowd school of thought ('the possibility of an Irish-American backlash over what has been perceived as rabid American bashing in Ireland should not be underestimated') explains the slowness of the republican leadership to react.

The AWM contains a diversity of opinions and ideas. Debate has been essential and the involvement of a broad spectrum of groups and individuals has given the movement depth and strength. The recent survey by the Eurobarometer agency which showed that 56% in Ireland opposed the use of Irish airports for American supply planes indicates the extent of our influence.

As the war on terror enters a new phase the



anti-war movement must also adapt in strategy and tactics. The role of socialists has been key in developing the movement and bringing different strands together. Both the anti-war movement and the anti-capitalist movement have built a new Left in Ireland, brought together at the demonstrations in Brussels where AWM and Globalise Resistance activists marched with over 25,000 against the EU's agenda of war and profit. This is a new left opposed to capitalism, militarism and imperialism. Bush's war drive is not over and we must continue to build that movement in whatever way we can.

Rory Hearne

NOTES

IRAQ - ANOTHER PAWN in the US's GAME

The Pentagon has mooted invading Iraq. Wolfowitz and Rumsfeld want to seize the opportunity to put another 'rogue state' in its place, while others prefer the easier targets – the Yemen or Somalia. Whatever results from these divisions, Iraq will remain high on Bush's hit list. The sanctions have already taken their toll and the Iraqi people simply do not figure in the logic of US foreign policy.

Ibrahim, one of three million Iraqis to have fled the devastation caused by UN-imposed sanctions in the last decade, told me the following story of a friend of his who had stayed behind. The man, a doctor facing starvation, sent his two daughters out to sell themselves, a common enough way for families to make ends meet in post-1991 Iraq. Unable to face the shame and heartbreak of this, he invited his daughters to feast with him on a chicken which cost four dollars – two thirds of his monthly salary. He then injected poison into the chicken and killed himself and the rest of his family.

What is most shocking about this is that it is an entirely rational, even honourable, response to the situation created by the sanctions regime. Under the 'dual use' sanctions, vital supplies such as water pumps, chlorine, fertiliser, parts for generators and medical machines, even paper, are prevented from reaching the farms, factories, schools, homes and hospitals where they are so desperately needed, lest they be converted into 'weapons of mass destruction' by the Iraqi military's supposed clique of evil scientists.

The resulting collapse in public services and the catastrophic decline in agricultural and industrial production has led to the deaths of at least one million Iraqis – half of them children under the age of five – from starvation and associated diseases. The famine conditions are aggravated by a six-fold increase in the incidence of malignant cancers, particularly affecting the very young, which result from the use of depleted uranium by allied troops during the Gulf War and subsequent military operations. Government rations, meted out under the meagre Oil for Food UN programme, last for twenty days each month and do not include meat and vegetables. For the vast majority in Iraq ends cannot be met, so they flee or starve.

Yet while mass murder is committed by the west on the Iraqi people, the regime of Saddam Hussein is perhaps even more securely entrenched than before the Gulf War began. The Iraqi rich have chlorine in their swimming pools, can travel abroad for essential medical treatment and of course commandeer what food and services are available for their own privilege.

The US was not always hostile to Saddam Hussein. He rose to power in 1979 and his first major action was to launch a war against revolutionary Iran. Though both sides were supplied with arms and intelligence by the west, the US increasingly began to view Hussein as the strongman necessary to counter a resurgent fundamentalism and to safeguard oil supplies. Accordingly, the US intervened decisively on the side of Iraq in 1987, blockading Iran and bombarding its warships and tankers in the Gulf. The following year Iran accepted the terms of a western-brokered ceasefire. The war cost up to a million Iraqi lives and saw a massive increase in foreign debt.

Hussein saw a way out of this debt by annexing Kuwait, whose despots had been undercutting Iraq by flooding the market with cheap oil. Not unreasonably, having been told by US ambassador April Glaspie that "we have no interest in Arab-Arab conflict like your border dispute with Kuwait", Hussein expected the west to turn a blind eye. But the US – whose

massive reliance on oil and gas supplies from the Middle East could brook no challenge saw this as an opportunity to assert its military might following the collapse of the



Eastern Bloc and responded ferociously. Iraqi assets were frozen, sanctions were imposed and a coalition in support of the war was hammered together using bribery and threat. Beginning on January 15 1991 a bombing campaign deliberately targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure returned Iraq to the Middle Ages. The Iraqi conscript army was massacred from the air while in retreat, with up to a hundred thousand corpses littering the road to Basra. Encouraged by George Bush senior's pronouncements of support, Kurds in the north and Shias in the south went into revolt against Hussein. They were ruthlessly crushed under the noses of the west.

A popular revolt could have spread beyond the borders of Iraq and posed a far greater challenge to imperialism than Saddam Hussein ever could. This would have been contrary to western interests. American war aims were defined by one spokesperson as 'the removal of Saddam Hussein, not his regime'. Now that the war was won all the bluster emanating from press releases about supporting democratic reform in Iraq (and Kuwait) could be put back in the cupboard like the inconvenient old baggage it always was. In contrast to the huge international apparatus and the effort that surrounds the administration of the sanctions, not a finger has been lifted to support democracy in Iraq.

Like their Afghan neighbours, the Iraqi people have long been pawns in imperialism's 'great game'. The sanctions must be seen in this context. The sanctions regime is not mere vindictiveness nor mindless barbarism on the part of the west. The suffering of the Iraqi people serves as a burning example of what happens to those who might seek to challenge western imperialism. The sanctions are a tactical deployment of mass terror in order to serve the west's overall strategy of control over the resources of the Middle East. For this, as Madeleine Albright has said, the deaths of half a million Iraqi children are 'a price worth paying'.

The sanctions are part of an array of tactics built up in the post-war period and are adjusted according to prevailing political conditions. These include the buttressing of the illegal state of Israel, the sponsorship of murderous dictatorships in Saudi Arabia and the attempted creation of a proxy state in Afghanistan. The sanctions cannot be brought down by fighting them solely as a single issue. Those who oppose them must also employ strategy and tactics.

In the west we must give practical and ideological support to the struggles of the Middle Eastern masses against their local and international exploiters. Our main task however is surely to turn on our own ruling classes who are active supporters of the sanctions regime. Every blow against them at home weakens their ability to carry out their mission abroad.

Dave Lordan

NOTES

DEFEND OUR CIVIL LIBERTIES

OUR RIGHT TO PROTEST



THE EVENTS of September 11th have been used as an excuse to crack down on civil liberties. The government is attempting to extend the definition of terrorism to include all sorts of legitimate protest. The EU has now defined terrorism to mean offences committed with the aim of "compelling a government or international organisation to perform or abstain from performing any act ...". The use of the term 'any act' in this definition is extraordinary as it virtually negates any right to protest. Under this definition a major strike or an anti-globalisation protest could be labeled a 'terrorist act'.

Last year, the manager of Dublin Corporation tried to introduce an effective ban on protest meetings in O'Connell Street but was defeated after hundreds of people turned up to defend their civil liberties. In another effort to prevent street protests a number of protest organisers are facing trials for breaches of the Public Order Act.

- 2 members of the Steering Committee of the Irish Anti-War Movement were arrested for organising a peaceful demonstration.

- 14 activists from Globalise Resistance face charges after a protest outside a privatisation conference in the Burlington Hotel.

- 8 people were arrested on car free day in Dublin.

- 2 anti-war campaigners who protested at the presence of US troops in Shannon were arrested.

- 1 member of Globalise Resistance was arrested at a lobby of the Department of Justice calling for support for Irish activists who were jailed in Italy after the Genoa protests.

We see a similar crackdown on protest across the world under the guise of the "war on terrorism". George Bush's Patriot Act allows the indefinite detention of "non-citizens", while Blair is introducing similar draconian legislation in his 'Terrorism Bill'. It is vital that we mobilize now to defend our democratic rights.

FACT FILE — THE IRISH RICH

The impending collapse of the Celtic tiger has brought tales of hardship from company bosses and the government. But after cashing in on the boom for ten years the rich are rolling in loot.

- Ireland's richest 100 increased their total wealth by 160% in the past five years, from €7.8 billion in 1997 to €16.82 billion today. For instance, Pat McDonagh, a serial entrepreneur saw his wealth rise by €260million since 1998. The combined annual salary income of Ireland's top 25 executives is over €523million.
- Anti-union airline boss MICHAEL O'LEARY added nearly €127m to his fortune in 2001. O'Leary is chief executive of Ryanair, and has a 12 percent stake worth €116million. The Ryan family, headed by TONY RYAN, (approximate wealth €457 million) who owns a third of anti-union firm Ryanair is a tax exile in Monaco. He claims to have the finest art collection in Ireland.
- DENIS O'BRIEN was "paid" €308 million in 2001. He moved to Portugal two years ago, which has allowed him to avoid €50 million in Irish tax. Denis O'Brien is found of golf and paid €31 million for the Quinta do Lago a golf course with a sailing lake in the middle – which brought his tally of golf courses up to 6.
- TONY O'REILLY media baron grabbed €17.8million last year. He is worth at least €1632 million. The man who owns most of Ireland's newspapers, used the dodgy Ansbacher Bank for some of his deals. Not really surprising since he has a home on the Cayman Islands where the bank is based. "I am a maximalist," he told one interviewer last year, "I want more of everything."
- DERMOT DESMOND probably has in excess of €190 million and Desmond, who is resident in the tax haven of Gibraltar had a relatively quite 2001 his earnings for the year were a mere €34 million
- MICHAEL SMURFIT CEO Smurfit Jefferson Group got €17 million last year. Michael Smurfit's gross pay works out at over €225,000 a week. That is enough to pay the average industrial wage for 432 workers. Most of these payments are tax-free, as they are funnelled through Smurfit Management Services SAM, a company in the tax haven of Monaco, where Smurfit lives. Smurfit (who is worth about €220million) owns the K Club where the rich and tedious go to play golf, drink, and unwind after a hard days tax evasion. A night in the Viceroy room of the K Club costs €1,270.
- Supermarket owners are also making a fortune while paying their workers a pittance. Dunnes boss MARGERET HEFFERNAN salary is €1.6m a year, other assets take Heffernan to €260m. FEARGAL QUINN has €119 million from his Superquinn shops. PETER J MUSGRAVE's and HUGH MACKEOWN's stake in Musgrave Group is worth €72 million. The group owns Ireland's SuperValu and Centra supermarkets.
- PATRICK CAMPBELL owns Bewley's he has €39 million. NEIL McCANN makes €93 million as chair of Fyffes, the anti union fruit distributor. Fyffes have a banana "manufacturing plant" in Dublin which allows them a special tax discount. PAT and Una Macdonagh are the directors of Supermaes fast food chain got €2.5 million in directors pay. The wily Pat Macdonagh also received a salary of €2.5million.
- It has been said that a rising tide lifts all yachts. Well Michael Smurfit forked out over €44million for 150 foot boat the Lady Ann Magee. It was launched in Italy by Prince Albert of Monaco no less. Lochlan Quinn head of Glen Dimplex paid a cool €46 million for a French vineyard. Tony Ryan bought Castleton Farm in Kentucky for €14 million. The southern gentleman's ranch sits on a 1,000 acres. In November he bought a horse 'Catchascatchan' for €4.5 million. Not to be outdone by the Quinns Ryan too bought a vineyard.
- The Irish rich are able to make so much cash because they don't pay any tax. Even when they don't hide it in off-shore accounts, bogus or otherwise, big business pays a minuscule amounts to the exchequer. In 1987, the tax rate on profits was 50%. This year it is a mere 12.5 percent. There is probably as much as €650 billion held in the Irish Financial Services Centre. Nobody is exactly sure because the centre is designed to help business move money around. What is certain is that companies in the IFSC only pay 10 percent tax on their profits.

Palestinian resistance and the roots of Islamism

Bush's war against terrorism immediately made itself felt on the West Bank. Israel launched an all-out attack on Palestinians who have been forced, yet again, to defend themselves. Phil Marfleet, British socialist and author of many writings on the Middle East, describes the politics of resistance on the West Bank and looks at why the Islamic Hamas drew support.

In Palestine graffiti can reveal much about mass politics. For 30 years, from the birth of the armed resistance in the mid-1960s, it was the slogans of the Al Fatah movement, the stencilled kuffiyeh (head dress) and the Kalashnikov which appeared on walls in Palestinian camps and cities.

Now the slogans are those of the Islamic movement, with murals of the Dome of the Rock, exploding Israeli buses and the suicide bombers of Hamas and Islamic Jihad. As one journalist in Gaza recently reported: "If strength is to be measured by pints of aerosol then Hamas has Gaza covered."

Most demonstrations and rallies are now called by Hamas and resistance in general is increasingly equated by Palestinians with the movement's "martyrs". Hamas maintains that the intifada must continue. It argues that Palestinians are engaged in a "conflict of survival" with Israel that can only end when Zionist occupation ceases. It insists that no part of Palestine should be surrendered and that Arabs and Muslims in general should unite in a struggle "to fight the Zionists until they leave". It strongly criticises Arafat and his Palestinian Authority (PA), which it says is merely a cover for Israeli occupation.

Most Palestinians agree. After suicide operations in Jerusalem and Haifa last year, opinion polls showed that among people in the West Bank and Gaza 80% supported continuation of the intifada and 64% were in favour of suicide attacks. Over 70% were critical of arrests by the PA of Islamic militants. Polls also revealed that for the first time the combined popularity of Hamas and Islamic Jihad exceeded that of Arafat's Al Fatah.

Islamism, which for decades was a marginal current within Palestinian nationalism, now dominates the political scene. It was always likely that the corrupt and repressive regime of Yasser Arafat would lose popular support – but why should the new militants come overwhelmingly from the religious right? What does this tell us about the character of the Palestinian struggle and what are the prospects for further change?

For the first decade after al-nakba – disaster" of 1948 – Palestinian society was paralysed. Over a million people

had been driven from towns and villages in a campaign of ethnic cleansing through which Zionist militias set out to remove the largest possible number of Arab inhabitants of Palestine. The effect was to demobilise the whole society. It was not until the late 1950s that Palestinian nationalism recovered. Then a new movement emerged – not in the refugee camps but within the prosperous communities of those Palestinians who had migrated to the Gulf.

The Gulf states of the 1950s needed professionals and technicians and the Palestinians provided many recruits. Some of these – the engineers and planners – soon became contractors and entrepreneurs. Among them was Yasser Arafat, an engineer working in Kuwait who rapidly became wealthy. In 1959 he and his friends among the Palestinian bourgeoisie-in-exile formed Al Fatah.

Their aim was to establish a state which would allow all their compatriots to return to Palestine. At the same time they wished to be rulers of a nation-state in their own right. Arafat wanted a state like the other Arab states – one in which he could enjoy the privileges of Kuwait's emir, Saudi Arabia's king or Egypt's president. He wanted a Palestinian capitalism of equal standing to the capitalisms of the rest of the Arab world.

When Arafat and his friends founded Fatah they had little idea of the storm they would unleash. As the first coherent nationalist organisation since the 1948 disaster. Fatah drew in many young activists and by the mid-1960s, when Arafat declared for armed resistance, the organisation was deluged with applications to join the fedayeen – the guerrilla forces. But Arafat and his friends never believed that the means to liberate Palestine was through mass struggle. They hoped that guerrilla action would draw in Arab states which would fight Israel on behalf of the Palestinians. At the same time they raised funding from Gulf regimes whose backing became critical to them.

Arafat was determined never to intervene directly in the affairs of these states, even setting out what he called "the principle of non-interference".

This group soon became the focus of hopes for change – for the liberation of Palestine and the return of the refugees. This mood was not confined to Palestinians, for the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), which was taken over by Fatah in 1969, enjoyed mass backing in the Arab countries.

Arafat struggled to contain Palestinian radicalism and to isolate the movement from its supporters across the Arab world. His main fear was that it would threaten the Arab rulers upon whose backing he depended. This led to a series of disasters, beginning in 1970 with the Black September conflict in Jordan, which cost 30,000 Palestinian lives.

Arafat learned nothing. While Israeli occupation kept millions of Palestinians in a state of poverty and desperation he became more authoritarian and repressive. When the first intifada broke out in 1987 he focused all his energies on containing and defusing it, using it to pressure the US to start the Oslo talks. These produced a “peace” in which the Palestinians were to be confined to a fraction of their homeland and would continue to endure Israeli rule. Arafat approached the second intifada in the same way. His aim has been to bring mass activity under control and then to bargain with the US and Israel for concessions. This has put him on a collision course with the activists.

One of the ironies of the emergence of Hamas is that it represents the formative political influence on Arafat himself. Hamas is in effect the Palestinian branch of the same Muslim Brotherhood to which Arafat was attracted when he was a student in Egypt in the 1950s. Then the Brotherhood was the only organisation to help remnants of the Palestinian national movement which attempted to resist the new state of Israel. With the rise of Fatah and the Palestinian Left, however, Islamism all but disappeared within Palestinian politics. The PLO was a secular organisation in which both Muslim and Christian activists played leading roles. By the mid-1980s, however Islamist currents were growing, especially in Gaza. Here the Palestinians were under greatest pressure: Israeli occupation confined over 1.5 million people to the refugee camps where they suffered increasing immiseration. The PLO was at its lowest ebb and Israel took a chance to develop what it hoped would be a counter-force to the national movement by encouraging a new Islamist current.

The main influences on Palestinian Islamism had come from Egypt. Here Islamic activism grew rapidly throughout the 1970s and it was members of Egypt's Islamic Jihad who assassinated President Sadat in 1981. Sadat, the first Arab leader to make a peace with Israel, was viewed by most Palestinians as a traitor who had sold out to the US and the Zionists: the Jihad seemed to have delivered justice. The Iranian revolution of 1979 also raised hopes that Muslim solidarity could challenge Israel. Arafat's failures added weight to the argument that the liberation of Palestine would be an



outcome of pan-Islamic struggle.

In Palestine, the Brotherhood focused initially on mosque building, prayer vigils, charity work and education. As a result of its efforts, between 1967 and 1987 the number of mosques in Gaza doubled to 150. The Brotherhood was opposed to armed activities: in effect it carried out religious social work with the aim of directing the mass of Muslims towards greater piety with the hope of establishing an Islamic order in Palestine. The Jihad group took a different line. It had been inspired by the Egyptian cleric Sayyid Qutb, who in the 1950s and 1960s broke from the Brotherhood, which he viewed as compromised by its efforts to share power with the regime of President Nasser. Qutb maintained that Muslims should never compromise with the state; rather they should unite to attack and destroy it, replacing it with a purified Islamic order. Activists should organise as a “vanguard” ready to lead the mass of Muslims in struggle.

In Palestine both the Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad were scornful of secular nationalism. This prompted the Israelis – who viewed the PLO as the main enemy – to support the Islamists. At this stage the occupation forces had complete control of the West Bank and Gaza but they did not intervene to prevent the building of mosques, and – although PLO activists were imprisoned in their thousands – they did not target similar numbers of Muslim activists.

There is also some evidence to suggest that directly or indirectly the Islamists received funds from Israel.

In December 1987 Gaza erupted in the first intifada: the highest level of sustained protest since the 1930s. Within days the Brotherhood had announced the formation of the Islamic Resistance Movement, known by its Arabic acronym as Hamas – meaning “zeal”, or “ardour”. The new organisation maintained that all the land of Palestine was waqf – a religious endowment – consecrated for all future generations of Muslims who were obliged to struggle actively to retrieve it from occupation. Peace talks and conferences were a waste of time: the way forward was through jihad – “an individual duty for every Muslim wherever he [sic] may be”.

In Egypt, the Sadat regime had similarly encouraged Islamism against the workers' movement and the Left, discovering too late that it had been riding a tiger. The Israelis soon discovered their own mistake. Within two years they had started a campaign of repression, jailing hundreds of activists including the Hamas leader Shaikh Ahmed Yassin. In 1992 they seized over 400 leading members of Hamas and Islamic Jihad activists and isolated them on a hillside in Lebanon. This initiative gave the Islamists a huge propaganda coup, providing them with media coverage which enabled both organisations to speak to the mass of Palestinians for the first time.

For the past decade, the balance of forces between the secular leaders of the PLO and Hamas/Islamic Jihad has been moving in favour of the Islamists. As Arafat has attempted to derail mass action they have drawn wider support. But they too have problems. Officially Hamas is committed to mobilising the mass of Palestinians against the occupation. In reality the organisation has moved to more and more conspiratorial activities. Its suicide bombings are the ultimate statement of substitution for general political activity: they exclude all but the “martyrs” involved and send a message to the mass of Palestinians that they have no active role in the resistance. Many young activists radicalised by the intifada have pointed out the consequences: if Islamist bombers have the answer to occupation then the uprising itself is of little consequence.

Like all Islamist currents Hamas and Islamic Jihad are long on the rhetoric of resistance and short on mass action. This was the case during the period of the rise of the Brotherhood in Egypt and later when “radical” Islamism emerged under the Sadat regime. There the talk of mass struggles for an Islamic state ended in a conspiracy which took the life of Sadat: the mass of Egyptians were bystanders.

Islamism is a movement of the middle classes. Its leaders are invariably professionals and businessmen, the account given by Hamas of its own leadership lists a group of accountants, engineers and doctors. Mass activity is alien to their politics, hence Islamists do not organise for independent action through trade unions, workplaces or other collectives.

Islamist organisations are authoritarian and elitist: they prescribe strategies which are imposed on rank and file activists who invariably become disillusioned and drift out of the movement. In the case of Palestine the reality of Israeli occupation, and the cynicism of Arafat in putting the survival of his own regime before the continuation of the intifada gives Islamism added momentum. The general pattern is clear however: Islamist leaderships are fearful of, and hostile to, all activities they cannot control and invariably attempt to inhibit mass action. Hamas and Islamic Jihad will not work to revitalise the intifada.

Like the nationalism of Arafat, that of Palestinian Islamists is committed to maintaining the status quo. Arafat took money from the Gulf states and committed himself to the policy of “non-intervention”. So too with Hamas, which has long been supported by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and which notes in its manifesto that “Hamas is not interested in the internal affairs of countries and does not interfere in any government's domestic affairs”. This is a message to its financial



Palestinian Authority police attacking Palestinian protesters – Fatah have had to dampen Palestinian militancy

backers that the struggle for change in Palestine will not affect their own tyrannies.

The tragedy of Palestine is that for 50 years the resistance movement has been isolated from struggles of others in the Arab world, especially from the workers' movements which have had great influence in anti-colonial struggles and in contesting regimes such as that of Sadat in Egypt. This has not been coincidental: Arafat was determined never to threaten his sponsors. The Islamists have the same policy – something noted by young activists who fear that the energies of the intifada are being dissipated. A Palestinian socialist in Ramallah recently noted that men and women of his generation are becoming as dismissive of the Islamists as they have long been of Fatah.

“They [Hamas leaders] are like Abu Ammar [Arafat] and his friends – it's just that they all have beards. Of course we support their rights to struggle and we support them when Arafat's police do Sharon's work by taking them to jail. But we do not have illusions that they are anything new.

“We have seen Fatah fail and we can see where Hamas and the others will go. Really it is up to us to understand what has happened and to organise for a new politics for Palestine in which we are part of the struggle of our brothers and sisters in all the Arab countries. Yes, we are Palestinians but we must also be part of a bigger movement which has the power to bring change. That's the future for us.”



Argentina

The fall of the neoliberal wall

A mass uprising in Argentina at the end of 2001 saw four presidents driven from office in two weeks. Kevin Wingfield reports on how the anger exploded onto the streets and examines the roots of the crisis in the Argentinian economy.

Argentina has been in economic meltdown following ten years of neo-liberalism. Four years ago the economy entered recession and International Monetary Fund (IMF)-imposed structural adjustment programmes transferred the costs of the crisis to the mass of the population. Unemployment, wage and pension cuts were the order of the day. The social welfare system virtually collapsed. In December the IMF refused a \$1.3 billion payment and the government imposed a freeze on bank accounts and further cuts in wages and pensions.

Forty percent of the population already lived on less than \$4 a day but now hundreds of thousands more are desperate and without food. Some decided they had had enough and gathered in front of warehouses and supermarkets requesting, and then demanding, food. Despite police intimidation the movement forced some shops to distribute bags of food. Thousands more joined it and shops were expropriated for basic necessities.

President De la Rúa declared a state of siege, suspending civil liberties, banning public meetings, imposing censorship and instructed the police to unleash a wave of repression. Within an hour, however, a million people flooded onto the streets. Huge demonstrations in Buenos Aires demanded all politicians "Go Away". The police attacked with horses, sticks, shields, teargas and rubber bullets. But demonstrators held their ground and within hours finance minister Cavallo resigned. The mass movement continued. The police fired live rounds into the demonstrators killing 27 and injuring many. Soon the president stepped down and the government collapsed.

The new president, Rodríguez Saá, lasted just a week before a new wave of protest forced him to resign. This represents a massive blow to Argentina's big capitalists, to the neo-liberal policies that governments have followed, and to the IMF which has helped impose them.

Argentina is a case study in the failure of neo-liberalism. The last ten years have seen the introduction of free market "deregulation" policies into Argentina as the big utilities were privatised and the currency was pegged to the US dollar. For a while the revenues from privatisation and export opportunities maintained a fragile boom but four years ago recession hit. The high value of the dollar made Argentinian exports uncompetitive, particularly after Brazil, Argentina's major trading partner in the sub-continent, devalued. The IMF and the country's rulers imposed austerity and deflation to safeguard repayment of the \$132 billion debt. From a country which had a standard of living equivalent to Italy, 44% of the population now survive below the poverty line. Of these 3.5 million have fallen into poverty within the past year.

The new government of Duhalde has devalued the peso

by 40%. Already prices in supermarkets have soared as have prices of imported items like pharmaceuticals, motor parts and oil. It is far from certain that price inflation can be held to 40% and Duhalde's promise to provide a million new jobs looks threadbare. The popular anger that exploded on the streets is not likely to disappear.

While unions did call seven highly effective one-day general strikes against the De la Rúa government, they didn't take the lead in the demonstrations that overthrew it. This is because Argentina's main union federation, the CGT, is dominated by a powerful bureaucracy looking for its share of the perks of power. It has strong links with Duhalde's Peronist party. There were thousands of workers in the movement that overthrew De la Rúa, Cavallo and Raú. Alongside them were very large numbers of the unemployed, whose pickets have blockaded main roads over the last year. There were also large numbers of shopkeepers, street traders and small business people. Finally, there were considerable numbers of the better-off middle classes, who have felt threatened by sudden impoverishment after a government decree restricting withdrawals from their bank accounts.

The "cross-class" nature of the demonstrations found expression in the slogans shouted. These were against corrupt ministers and banks, but not against big business as such. People sang the Argentinian national anthem rather than songs that expressed any clear anti-capitalist feeling. The danger is that without the working class movement taking the lead and providing an alternative, the middle class elements could look to the extreme right. For example Osvaldo Comide, the president of the small firms association, commented that Duhalde's measures "have addressed 80% of our demands". Devaluation means the cost of foreign goods will rise, in comparison to local produce. "The enemies of small business are no longer in the presidential palace. We are going to protest outside the banks instead," said Comide. But when workers demand increased wages to compensate for high prices, he will be much less enthusiastic.

But an alternative is possible. Within the unions and in key workplaces since the 1970s, "classist" (class struggle) tendencies have existed, and in recent local elections Left parties polled more than a million votes. That Left now has to attempt to provide some leadership for the anger that exploded on the streets.

Millions of people are desperate for change but Peronist nationalist doctrines which preach state intervention in the interests of workers and "patriotic" employers alike will not provide it. There can be no solution to the crisis without an all-out onslaught on big business at home, as well as the banks and the IMF.

That requires a revolutionary socialist strategy of struggling to take over the centres of economic power from below. It means seizing the factories and offices and replacing the anarchy of the capitalist market by democratic planning. The key to achieving that is linking the bitterness on the streets and the collective power of workers in the workplaces. Otherwise there is the risk that as successive governments prove incapable of ending the economic crisis, right wing forces will emerge with their own reactionary slogans.

OPEN TO DEBATE

Open borders for goods – why not for people?

In early December we witnessed the horrific deaths of eight asylum seekers in the back of a sealed container in Wexford. According to John O'Donoghue it was "his worst nightmare". Bertie Ahern, in a Bush-like speech, pledged to "do everything in his power to find those responsible".

These statements are the height of hypocrisy. The very people who are responsible for these deaths are Ahern and O'Donoghue. The trafficking of asylum seekers is a disgusting business where individuals are making a vast profit out of other people's misery and desperation. But it is only allowed to flourish because of the strict immigration controls around Fortress Europe.

The incident in Wexford is all too familiar. Last year 58 Chinese people suffocated in a container entering Dover. Along the Adriatic coast of Italy washed up bodies of asylum seekers are a regular occurrence. These tragedies, along with the bodies that are never found, are the grim cost of immigration controls. And blood is all over the hands of the governments of Western Europe. These champions of neo-liberalism, who want free rein to move capital around the world and want economies worldwide deregulated to allow for greater profits, are the very ones that want to ensure that workers do not have the same freedom.

Over the last 10 years the number of asylum seekers in the world has grown massively. The overwhelming majority of these asylum seekers never get anywhere near Europe. Europe has erected a virtual steel wall around it to prevent people coming in.

Controlling the movement of people has always been central to capitalism. Capitalism would never have got off the ground at all if it were not for slavery. In the post-war years the need for labour to rebuild Europe saw the ruling classes fighting over cheap labour from their former colonies in Africa, Asia and The Caribbean. As boom turned to bust, controls tightened and the same governments rushed to scapegoat the very workers who had rebuilt their cities. This is what we are witnessing in Ireland today as the Celtic Tiger goes into decline.

Immigration controls are also a political weapon to keep workers competing with each other – the old tactic of divide and rule. The race card has always proved a handy way of doing this. The current strict immigration controls are based on a premise that people escaping war, poverty and oppression are actually trying to pull the wool over our eyes and that it is necessary to examine their story under a microscope and treat them as inhumanely as possible before they can be declared "genuine". By doing this the government can sow the seeds of suspicion which in turn allows racism to flourish.

But when you look more closely at the varying success rates of asylum applications internationally, you can see that immigration controls have nothing to do with "genuine" or "bogus" asylum seekers and everything to do with the needs and priorities of the governments of each country. For example in 1996, the Canadian government decided that 76% of asylum seekers from Zaire were genuine while Britain decided that only 1% of Zaireans were. In the same year Canada gave refugee status to 82% of Sri Lankans while Britain gave refugee status to 0.2%. This, of course, is not because asylum seekers who go to Canada are "genuine" whereas those who go to Britain are

The cost of Fortress Europe – eight refugees were killed in this container in Wexford trying to enter Ireland

"bogus". It is because in 1996 Canada was in the midst of an economic boom and had a shortage of labour. The entire genuine/bogus debate is bogus in itself.

It is often argued that racism is caused by a lack of education and that it flourishes because people are ignorant. In turn this can lead on to a belief that the only reason governments are racist is because they are responding to their electorate. This is entirely wrong. Racism starts at the top of society and if conditions are difficult enough at the bottom it grows. In 1998 when Austria held the EU presidency, it claimed in a draft paper on immigration and asylum that the number of migrants to "the rich, especially Western Europe, states exceeds 1.5 million a year." It goes on to say that "the proportion of illegal immigrants in this total has clearly increased. It must now be assumed that every other migrant in the 'first world' is there illegally." There is no knowing whether these figures are accurate but one thing is sure, the muddier the conjecture the better it sticks.

The process of demonising asylum seekers starts with immigration controls. The direct result of this is the countless deaths of some of the most desperate people in our society. All immigration controls are racist both in their application and their effect.

But, the argument goes, would not open borders put a strain on our services? This ignores the fact that our services are already under strain. Even if an asylum seeker didn't get housed, or were refused a hospital bed, there still wouldn't be enough houses and beds to go round.

The number of asylum seekers are simply too small to blame them for what is chronic underfunding of our state services. Furthermore, the greatest strain on the public purse comes from handouts to the corporate and private sector: subsidies to multinationals in terms of tax breaks and to the private sector through state support – the part-funding of private patients in public hospitals is an example of this. This is where the system is being milked.

In the upcoming election, we can expect politicians to scapegoat asylum seekers again. We should not allow them to deflect our anger so easily. If we want a fair and just system, we need to fight for a society where people are free to move across borders and are not blamed for social ills not of their making.

Melisa Halpin



Abortion Referendum

why it must be defeated



As the politicians yet again drag the abortion question into the political limelight, it is worth reflecting on the startling contradictions confronting women in Ireland in 2002. The Celtic Tiger was virtually built on the contribution of vast numbers of working women. The resulting financial independence, albeit poorly paid, has brought independence in all sorts of other areas. The constant rise each year in the numbers of women seeking abortions, and a slow but sure increase in the numbers saying publicly that they have had abortions, is part of the greater confidence on the part of women.

In stark contrast to this though, Irish women in legal terms are still second class citizens who are meant to aspire to domestic duties only, who get paid three quarters of what men earn and whose full personhood is curtailed by a supposed 'unborn child'. It is this hypocrisy that Fianna Fail and the Progressive Democrats wish to foist upon us yet again in the proposed abortion referendum.

Under Bertie Ahern's proposed *Human Life in Pregnancy Bill*, a woman will not have access to abortion in Ireland unless she is guaranteed to die during the exact term of the pregnancy, rather than months or years later. If this bill is passed pregnant women will receive medical treatment that doctors consider necessary to literally save their lives but no more. Suicide will be completely prohibited as grounds for abortion.

This February/March is the tenth anniversary of the X-case, when a 14-year-old rape victim was prevented from leaving the country to have an abortion. It took thousands of people taking to the streets to force the courts to reverse their decision. In the subsequent referendum in November 1992 people voted not only to guarantee a woman the right to travel to Britain for an abortion, but also in favour of a woman's right to have a termination in Ireland if she was suicidal. The Fianna Fail government

of the time promised to legislate on these grounds but did nothing. Three successive governments later and still there has been no action. Ahern is now trying to push through a referendum that will reverse this decision and introduce one of the world's most repressive pieces of abortion legislation.

If this Bill is passed a woman who is so desperate that she may consider aborting herself could be put in prison for up to 12 years. Doctors, counsellors, campaigners, as well as parents, partners and friends, could also face up to twelve years in prison if they are accused of aiding or abetting, or are believed to be encouraging, pregnant women to consider termination. No other country, with the exception of Iran, has such draconian legislation. Most worryingly of all, Health Board workers responsible for pregnant children in care (the C case), many of whom have been victims of sexual assault, will be refused permission to travel to Britain with their charges because the threat of suicide is so thoroughly excluded.

Yet abortion is a reality in Irish society even though Bertie Ahern and his government are happy to ignore it. For them abortion is alright as long as it is not on Irish soil. But this is dangerous hypocrisy. Women in Ireland already have abortions at a later gestational age than anywhere else in Europe, risking potentially serious medical consequences for women. And because referral is prohibited, Irish women having abortions in Britain who encounter complications suffer because medical information cannot be exchanged, lest criminal charges be made against their doctor.

If truth be told, the last thing this referendum is really about is abortion. The government plays the abortion card when it suits it. When a pregnant Nigerian woman challenged a deportation order, her legal team argued that

the 'unborn child' also had rights and that its life would be in danger if sent back to Nigeria. The Government's Attorney General turned the case down on the grounds that the 'unborn child' could hardly be considered a person. Nobody is suggesting that this case should have won on these grounds. On the contrary it is sad that staying in Ireland, if you are black, requires going to such legal lengths to avoid deportation. What it does show is the utter hypocrisy of a government that does everything to prioritise a foetus's life over a woman's and then reverses the order when its racist immigration policy requires it.

The insistence to proceed with this referendum stems from the fact that the Celtic Tiger has collapsed, unemployment is rising, the health service is in a shambles, all those Ansbacher account holders' names are about to be published and FF has an election to win. Ahern is making the assessment that the Labour Party and Sinn Fein will be divided on the issue and too focused on the upcoming election to risk sticking their necks out on abortion. He reckons, as Haughey did in the Eighties, that the abortion issue is a good deflector from other potential crises.

He may well have miscalculated. Irish women will not be forced back into the official comely maiden/Virgin mother mould. Furthermore, the bishops coming out in favour of the referendum may just be the kiss of death for Ahern. Increasing cynicism towards formal Catholic teaching on the issue has chipped away at the shame women once felt about these issues.

Politically it is important that this referendum is resoundingly defeated. The uncertainty of the recession means that FF may well like to depend on its more conservative Catholic rump to ride the difficult time ahead. We cannot let them away with this. It is a measure of the cynical manoeuvring of our political masters that they are still attempting to smother women's rights to save their own skins.

Sinead Kennedy

A Pro-Choice group 'Alliance for a NO Vote' (ANV) has been set up to oppose this referendum. If you wish to get involved, please contact Sinead at 087-2612634.



It's a Woman's Right to Choose

For socialists, abortion is a political issue not a moral one. We believe that each woman faced with an unwanted pregnancy should be allowed to decide for herself, in accordance with her own conscience and beliefs, whether or not she goes ahead with it. And if she decides to end the pregnancy, the operation should be available free, on the health service, at her request only - not on the word of some doctor. What makes abortion a political issue is the fact that this is not what happens. At present, the person whose life will be most intimately affected by the pregnancy is not allowed to make the decision. Instead, it's made by TDs, MPs, doctors, lawyers and clergy.

Abortion has always been a class issue. Well-off women have always been able to get safe abortions in the clean beds of private clinics while working class women risked death with backstreet or self-induced abortions. But anti-abortionists only started to shout about it when working class women started to have safe abortions too.

Although abortion is illegal in Ireland, North and South, it is very much a reality of Irish life. Each year, some 10,000 women from this island travel to England to terminate unwanted pregnancies. Statistics collected by the English Department of Health show over 7,000 women from the South and about 2,000 from the North travel each year - that's over 150 women every week. And the numbers are probably higher since some women do not give their Irish address.

All this means that almost a quarter of a million Irish women have had abortions in Britain since it was legalised there in 1967. For most of these, at least one other person knew about and helped them on their journey - sometimes a large circle of people is involved in getting the money together to help a woman get to England. So, abortion has touched the lives of very many people on this island. This, together with the changing nature of women's lives, and the publicity around the Ms. X and Ms. C rape victim cases in the South, has brought a massive shift in attitude over the last 20 years.

In Ireland, the middle classes are able to declare the 'liberal agenda' complete because if they need an abortion, they face few problems in getting to a clinic in England. They have the money, no one is surprised at them heading off to London for a weekend and they know their way around the airports and tube stations. But there is a layer of working class women who cannot even dream of getting together the money for an abortion. While some can scrape it together, women living in the deepest poverty, often the most desperate, are less likely to have ways of getting the money.

To a woman who can't get her hands on £500 sterling, it means continuing an unwanted pregnancy or trying some dangerous way of causing a miscarriage. The desperate lengths women do go to when they need an abortion have been admitted recently by GPs in the North, 11% of whom say they have had to deal with the results of amateur abortions.

The class a woman comes from also has a huge effect on whether a woman faced with an unplanned pregnancy can consider continuing it. Well-off women know they have a decent house and enough money to be able to pay for childcare. For many working class women, the reality of poor and expensive housing, low paid jobs and no affordable childcare means they cannot really contemplate continuing an unplanned pregnancy. For this reason trade unions who say they speak for working class women should be in the forefront of the campaign for a no vote in this referendum.

Goretti Horgan



Sectarianism in the North

- is it getting worse?

After the horrific attacks in North Belfast, Sean McVeigh examines recent findings which show a different picture and a different way forward.

The murder of postal worker Daniel McColgan, and the escalating violence and intimidation surrounding Holy Cross has shown the bitterness of sectarianism in North Belfast. Many have concluded that the two communities are more entrenched than ever.

In some ways this is true. The UDA is intent on spreading and deepening division. Through their attacks on Holy Cross, and Our Lady of Mercy Girls Secondary School and the mixed housing on the Crumlin Rd. they want to make it impossible for Catholics to go to school or live in Protestant areas. Because areas have become more segregated, they are able to push through their vicious attacks.

DUP and UUP politicians have also whipped up sectarian tensions by campaigning on the issue of "Catholics taking all the housing in North Belfast".

Ronnie Flanagan, and the much heralded new PSNI, have taken virtually no action against the UDA and its allies during the pipe and petrol bombing campaign against Catholic homes.

At a deeper level, the re-emergence of community sectarianism stems from worsening poverty. The Power Sharing Executive at Stormont has done nothing to remove the housing crisis that afflicts the North. Typical of the Tory policies of the Executive is Education Minister, Martin McGuinness, implementing the privatisation of cleaning services in Belfast schools. Belclean, a private company, has promised the Dept of Education that it will save the Dept £5000 for each school it cleans. This results directly in the deterioration of the working conditions of hundreds of workers, many of whom live in areas like Ardoyne and Glenbryn. This is the sort of policy that fuels sectarianism.

However, it would be wrong to conclude that the picture across the North, and particularly where people work, is as uniformly sectarian as events in the Ardoyne suggest. A number of reports have appeared recently and their findings are worth examining in detail to see how much light they shed on present day sectarianism in Northern Ireland.

A new survey by a University of Ulster lecturer, Dr Peter Shirlow on sectarianism in parts of Belfast, has caused a great deal of comment in the Irish and British press. At first sight this survey would seem to confirm greater sectarianism. The press has reported that Shirlow's team of researchers surveyed a large number of homes (*The Guardian* said 4,800, *The Observer* said 1,800) in Belfast and found that:

■ 62% of respondents believe that cross community relations have got worse since the first IRA ceasefire in 1994

■ 68% of young people between the ages of 18 and 25, 'have never had a meaningful conversation' with a person from the other religion.

■ 62% of young people have been victims of physical or verbal sectarian abuse since the ceasefires

■ Only 5% of Catholics work in a Protestant area and only 8% of Protestants work in a Catholic area.

85% of those surveyed said they would not enter in an area dominated by the other religion at night – even by car. 58% would not use shops or leisure centres in an area controlled by the other religion.

Shirlow has also had access to the 2001 census which shows that Belfast is now more segregated than ever before with 66% of the population living in an area where the residents are either 90% Protestant or 90% Catholic. This is an increase

from the last census in 1991 when 63% of the population lived in such highly segregated areas.

Although the full report has not been published, Shirlow argues that neither the peace process, nor the Good Friday Agreement has solved the problem of sectarianism. Socialists have been arguing this for some time. However there are problems in the way in which Shirlow's findings have been reported in the media.

Much of the coverage, such as Henry McDonald's piece in *The Observer*, did not even mention that the survey was undertaken exclusively on 'sectarian interfaces', in 12 housing estates on either side of 6 'peacelines' in Belfast- Tigers Bay/New Lodge, Glenbryn/Ardoyne, White City/Whitewell etc. These areas are some of the most impoverished in the North, where politicians and groups like the UDA have been channelling people's anger and despair not at the system but at other workers across the peaceline.

The problem with generalising from these figures is that other attitude surveys conducted across the North, not just on the 'peacelines' of Belfast, show very different findings. Take *The Northern Ireland Life and Times* attitude survey conducted every year by researchers at the University of Ulster and Queens University Belfast. The findings of this survey are very different from Shirlow's.

Here are some of its findings,

Question: Are community relations better or worse today than in previous years?

Year 1999		
Better	Worse	Same
50%	7%	41%
Year 2000		
Better	Worse	Same
42%	12%	41%

Question: Would you prefer to live in a mixed or single religion neighbourhood?

Year 1999	
Own religion	Mixed religion
22%	73%
Year 2000	
Own religion	Mixed religion
22%	70%

Question: Would you prefer a workplace of people of your own religion or a mixed workplace?

Year 1999	
Own religion	Mixed religion
9%	86%
Year 2000	
Own religion	Mixed religion
12%	81%

These figures are radically different from Shirlow's. They confirm that sectarian fears and tensions are on the rise but the situation across the North is not the same as on a peaceline in North Belfast. They also show that given socialist politics and organisation the tide can be turned against the bigots.

Another problem with the press coverage of Shirlow's survey are the comments regarding workplace segregation between Catholics and Protestants. Someone who has never worked in Belfast but who has read the coverage of this survey could be forgiven for thinking that Catholics and Protestants don't work alongside each other. *The Guardian* states "the workforces are also segregated. A mere 5% of the workforce in companies located in areas dominated by the Protestant community are Catholic, and 8% of Protestants had jobs in Catholic areas."

What exactly does this mean? Does it mean that very few workers from Tigers Bay work across the 'peaceline' in the New Lodge? Or very few Ardoyne people work in Glenbryn? If this is what is meant it is hardly surprising (not least because there are very few jobs in these areas for anybody). But the coverage of the survey has suggested that workplace segregation is on the rise, when the opposite is the case.

In previous generations a high degree of segregation existed between Catholic and Protestant workers. This was symbolised by the divisions amongst the dockworkers.

The 'deep sea dockers' (international ships, irregular, part time work) were Catholic, while the 'cross channel dockers' (steady work, weekly paid) were Protestant.

The 2001 Equality Commission Report, which monitors the religious makeup of the Northern workforce states, that the Private Sector now looks like this:

	Number of Workers	Protestant	Catholic
British Airways	325	65%	35%
British Telecom	1,490	56%	43%
BT Belfast Engineering	276	55%	45%
Cabletel	400	57%	43%
Century Newspapers	247	75%	25%
Coca Cola Bottlers	463	65%	35%
Compass Ireland	2,190	66%	44%
Crestacare NI	840	74%	26%
Daewoo Electronics	680	68%	32%
Desmond & Sons Ltd	2700	32%	68%
Du Pont UK	690	36%	63%
Eason & Son NI	387	55%	45%
Ford Motor Co.	534	53%	47%
Gallagher Ltd	1250	85%	15%
Iceland Frozen Foods	940	55%	45%
Marks and Spencer	1400	56%	44%
Michelin Tyre PLC	1338	74%	26%
National Australia Group	2300	71%	29%
Nortel Networks	1600	72%	28%
Queens University Belfast	3225	64%	36%
Sodexo Ltd	1350	56%	43%

The public sector figures look like this:

	Number of Workers	Protestant	Catholic
Belfast C	3,755	62%	38%
Belfast City Council	2,284	66%	36%
Belfast Education & Library Board	2,060	52%	48%
Belfast Institute of Further Education	869	55%	45%
BBC	700	59%	41%
Citybus	685	42%	57%
EHSSB	212	59%	41%
Fire Authority	2000	67%	34%
N.I. Housing Executive	3234	51%	49%
N.I. Railways	669	68%	32%
Royal Victoria Hospital	5,800	39%	60%
Ulsterbus	2,150	58%	42%

Of course, some areas of the public sector continue to discriminate. Carrickfergus Borough Council has less than 10 Catholic workers out of a workforce of 172.

Dr Shirlow has been quoted in the press giving his explanation as to why sectarianism has got worse. In *The Belfast Telegraph* he said "People are uncertain of what the future will bring, and so they seek to cling to what they know" and also "Sectarian tension is worsening because both communities perceive themselves as victims while refusing to acknowledge the other sides suffering." These kinds of explanations only put the blame on ordinary people and let individual politicians, paramilitaries, the government, the police and the system itself off the hook.

Interestingly, Shirlow seems to have had a different explanation for sectarianism just two years ago when he published a similar report on sectarianism in north Belfast called *Fear, Mobility and Living in the Ardoyne and Upper Ardoyne (Glenbryn) Communities*. In this report he says clearly that "the divisions that exist between the two communities are due to fear and the contestation over housing". He also makes it clear that segregation is caused by fear of attack and not hatred. He says "avoidance strategies are influenced by fear".

The fear has been stoked up by loyalist paramilitaries. They have gotten away with the most horrific attacks on Catholic people with the state looking on. But Sinn Fein's desire for a place at the table of Government has also left a vacuum in areas like Ardoyne. Young people who used to write "Brits Out" on walls now increasingly write "Kill all Huns" (Protestants). Furthermore, when Gerry Kelly of Sinn Fein says that public spending on Glenbryn is "diverting" resources from Nationalist areas, he is saying that Glenbryn is the rival community which Catholics must compete against.

Where people mix at work – and these findings show that they increasingly are – offers the best way to take on both sectarianism and the causes of it. The ICTU's half day stoppage in response to the killing of Daniel McColgan is what workers, both Protestant and Catholic, need more of. Only this kind of action can begin to offer a way out of the cul-de-sac of sectarianism. By tackling sectarianism head on, it can also counteract the downward spiral of fear. Before the ceasefires, trade union marches brought pressure for peace. Such action from workers can begin also to challenge the erosion of services and poverty that breed sectarianism. Socialists and trade unionists should be raising these arguments again.

One member of the teacher's union, NASUWT, at Holy Cross summed it up: "It was awful, the children were very frightened as were many of the staff. The problem with this sort of thing is that we feel so powerless and scared as individuals to do anything about it. That's why the unions need to organise something, so that people can feel that they are not on their own in this thing and they can do something about it."



Global Recession

How did the economists get it so wrong?

On November 7, Maurice O'Connell of the Irish Central Bank pronounced the Celtic Tiger dead. Between 1994 and 2000, the Irish economy was one of the most successful capitalist economies in the world with an average growth rate of 9 percent.

It started 2001 with the same spectacular rate of growth and then half-way through the year fell to near zero growth figures. George Lee, the economics correspondent for RTE, described it as one of the most dramatic turnarounds in the global economy. Even if the political consequences of the fall are not yet evident, he was not far wrong. Yet none of the conventional economists predicted the recession. On the contrary, they argued that the boom would continue until at least 2015.

The Economic and Social Research Institute, in its 1997 Medium Term Review, predicted that 'over the next fifteen years Ireland may establish a standard of living among the highest in Europe'. Two years later it was even more precise. There would be 'an annual growth rate of 5.1% between 2000 and 2005, falling back to 4.3% per annum thereafter to 2010 and to something over 3% in the period 2010 to 2015'. The latest Medium Term Review has a short introduction written after September 11 which acknowledges some difficulties but still ends up predicting a boom until 2015!

Paul Sweeney, author of *The Celtic Tiger: The Miracle Explained* and a figure close to the SIPTU bureaucracy, argued in 1998 that 'the Irish miracle appears to have been built on a solid foundation on which a lasting edifice can be built'. Optimism appears to be the norm for all commentators on the Celtic Tiger.

Conventional economists do not accept that capitalism is a system built on internal contradictions. Yet the contradictions within the system are fundamental. Each individual capitalist is forced to try to both accumulate more capital and to achieve higher rates of return on their investment through maximising the rate of exploitation. This is usually presented in neutral language such as 'reducing unit cost' or 'achieving flexibility' but the effect is to reduce the share of income going to labour. Pay cuts and productivity carry this through. Yet, collectively, capitalists need to sell the growing number of goods they produce to a mass market and so the effect of this pressure is to eventually 'weaken consumer confidence'. Their consumers cannot afford their products. This can be delayed through luxury spending by the wealthy or through an expansion in capital goods or machinery. But the contradiction eventually tends to assert itself.

A Marxist analysis of capitalism starts with the issue of exploitation and distribution of wealth. Conventional economists start with the supposedly neutral laws of supply and demand which they assume tend to move towards equilibrium. Failure to even recognise exploitation means that they present a one-sided

ideological view of the world which plays down its instability. These problems are exacerbated by the dominance of neo-liberal ideas among Irish economists. Typically they focus on the 'supply side' of inputs going into the economy, claiming that if labour supply and flows of foreign capital are got right, the economy will be in boom for decades. Dermot Desmond's former stockbroking firm NCB led the way in this nonsense claiming that because the age dependency ratio – the ratio of workers to those who are outside the labour force – was favourable in Ireland the boom could go on. The simple fact that countries such as Thailand or Turkey had even more favourable rates and still faced huge economic crises never dawned on these experts who mix analysis with money-making.

The vast majority of economists did not even face up to the elementary fact that the Celtic Tiger had become extremely dependent on the US economy. Ireland today has a higher ratio of US investment to Gross Domestic Product than most countries in Latin America. Their support for neo-liberalism means that they did nothing to examine the contradictions within the US boom, preferring to repeat claims that information technology produced a 'new paradigm of growth' which had ended the business cycle, even after the collapse of the dot.coms.

Yet despite all these momentous errors, the same economists are now predicting a 'V shape' rather than 'U shape recession'. A V shape means there will be a short, sharp recession with a bounce back in mid 2002, while a U shape means a longer period in the depths. These predictions are driven by the IMF – yes, the same agency which helped bring about the crash in Argentina. Their latest report claimed that the 'bounce back' would bring global growth of 3.5% next year.

The reality is otherwise. The world economy is experiencing its first synchronised downturn in two decades. The three big blocs – the US, Japan and Europe are all doing badly. The US has a huge problem with corporate debt and an inflated asset bubble that grew with the crazy casino economy that was Wall Street in the nineties. Even the HSBC bank – a slightly more realistic conventional economics think-tank – predicts that any upturn in the US in 2002 will be slight and will be the result of 'policy induced measures'. Because the fundamental problems are not being solved, any recovery is likely to falter again. Japan is mired in a deep recession which appears to be getting worse, while the mighty German economy effectively entered a recession last year.

If Ireland is one of the most globalised economies in the world, it follows that there are extremely dark clouds ahead. The choice facing workers is either to continue the disastrous policy of social partnership which has seen over 2000 jobs go in Aer Lingus without a fight – or to embark on a new policy of resistance.

Kieran Allen

IRELAND UNCOVERED

Garda lies and frame ups

Garda corruption in Donegal, revealed in the framing of the McBrearty family, is just the tip of a massive iceberg. Rod Fitzsimons reports.

When the body of cattle dealer Richie Barron was found by a ditch in Raphoe, Co Donegal in October 1996, no-one could have imagined the consequences which, in the words of Fine Gael TD, Jim Higgins, amount to "the most sinister, ruthless and malicious case of Garda corruption in the history of the State."

Initially the police believed Mr Barron was a hit-and-run victim. Yet within hours the road was cleared and all potential evidence destroyed. The failure to preserve the crime scene has never been explained, but it made possible the events that followed.

Within weeks of Mr Barron's death the gardai decided – for reasons never revealed – that he had been murdered by a blow to the head and that two local men, Frank McBrearty Jnr and his cousin, Mark McConnell, did it. McBrearty Snr owns a pub and nightclub in Raphoe, and before long eleven members of his extended family had been arrested for questioning.

In the years since, one critical fact has escaped attention: from day one of the 'murder' inquiry the Donegal guards were assisted by four members of the elite Cobra Unit from Garda Headquarters in Dublin. Dubbed 'The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse', these officers have helped secure murder convictions around the country. Their role in the Donegal scandal remains a mystery.

What is known is that shortly into Frank McBrearty Jnr's interrogation, detectives emerged with what they claimed was a signed confession to the 'murder' of Mr Barron. The DPP's office, however, seems to have been unconvinced since McBrearty was never charged. Fabricating evidence is a serious offence, yet no garda officer has been called to account for concocting a murder confession – in a case where there wasn't even a murder!

"What we are dealing with here," Fine Gael TD Jim Higgins told the Dail, "is a deliberate miscarriage of justice ... a calculated decision taken by senior gardai to finger and frame the McBrearty family ... a trumped up murder case based on a total fabrication."

While his son was being framed, Frank McBrearty Snr was interrogated to the point of collapse and rushed to hospital, only to be hospitalised again after interrogation resumed. One of his relatives suffered a nervous breakdown after her interrogation. Her health has been ruined.

And this was just the beginning. When they failed to prosecute for murder, the police organised an all-out campaign of harassment against the McBrearty family, issuing no fewer than 160 summonses in the coming months for alleged motoring, licensing law and public order offences.

The amount of public money spent prosecuting these trumped-up charges was huge, but when the McBreartys tried to show in court that they were victims of a police campaign,

'a female garda gave the Carty investigation the name of an officer she had witnessed practising McBrearty Jnr's signature just before McBrearty 'signed' the bogus murder confession'.

'Carty also found that police officers had paid petty criminals to make false statements against the Mc Breartys. The informers are being charged – but not their paymasters.'

The McBreartys, harassed and victimised

no fewer than five officers denied the existence of written instructions to 'get the McBreartys'. The written orders eventually surfaced in court, but none of the officers who lied under oath has been charged with perjury.

The victimisation of the McBrearty's was so blatant that Justice Minister John O'Donoghue had to launch an inquiry, not public, but an internal one, under Assistant Commissioner Kevin Carty. All charges against the McBreartys were soon dropped – without explanation or apology, and they are now suing the State for damages. The case could cost the public as much as £15m.

Carty's report is top-secret, but it is known that a female garda gave him the name of an officer she had witnessed practising McBrearty Jnr's signature just before McBrearty 'signed' the bogus murder confession. After revealing this to Carty, she was intimidated out of her job by corrupt colleagues. She too is suing for damages.

Another Carty witness, the wife of a centrally involved officer, told of how her husband and others would divide up captured IRA weapons, concealing some of them so they could claim later to have found additional caches. They even made a massive bomb once and planted it in the North before informing the RUC. Their self-invented 'success' rate against the IRA brought them kudos and promotion.

Carty also found that police officers had paid petty criminals to make false statements against the McBreartys. The informers are being charged – but not their paymasters.

There have been claims, too, that a garda officer involved in the McBrearty frame-up organised the fire-bombing of £80,000 worth of TV signaling equipment during the anti-MMDS campaign some years ago. After the incident gardai tried to frame a local family for the attack. This family are also suing for damages. Another officer in the McBrearty affair allegedly runs a stolen car ring that supplied vehicles used by the Real IRA in the Omagh bombing. It is a truly appalling vista. And it gets worse.

A central figure in the whole affair has threatened that if he's charged with corruption he'll reveal other cases where senior Dublin detectives planted evidence and fabricated confessions to corruptly get convictions down the years. His evidence would end many senior police careers and could completely shatter the judicial establishment.

To cap it all, the state pathologist, Dr Harbison, recently carried out a post mortem on Mr Barron's exhumed remains. The verdict? It was a hit and run accident! The Donegal coroner requested an exhumation four years ago. A senior police officer blocked it while John O'Donoghue sat on his hands. Is it any wonder the Minister for Justice is determined to prevent a public inquiry?

Rod Fitzsimons

The Health Service

Strategy? What strategy?

Peadar O'Grady, child psychiatrist, argues that the crisis in the health service can only be solved by proper public funding.

Health is back as the number one political issue for the looming general election. Waiting lists of years for routine hospital treatment and hours (even days) for emergency treatment in casualty are now commonplace. Bills from General Practitioners and hospitals mean many Irish people do not request help when ill and when they do, treatment courses are often not followed up or are stopped prematurely because of costs.

Meanwhile consultants and GP's enjoy incomes of well in excess of €100,000 per year.

After an abortive attempt by the Fianna Fail/PD government to reply to the health crisis in 2000 (when their special meeting in Tinahealy Co. Wicklow ended in disarray) their health strategy was finally announced in November 2001.

A 208 page document was issued and the Health Minister, Micheal Martin announced that the report promised reduced waiting times for hospital treatment to less than three months, 3000 more hospital beds, reduced income eligibility levels for medical cards, better GP services in the form of GP cooperatives and much more besides! The media and opposition parties were hushed with awe and reverence but slowly the truth of the matter was revealed.

Waiting times for hospital treatment would be reduced only from the date they are "scheduled" by hospital consultants – which could mean longer delays if hospital clinic appointments are postponed to ensure that any follow-up treatment appointments fall within the three month limit. The waiting time for the initial appointment will not necessarily be counted.

Medical card income eligibility levels would be "clarified" and their "scope broadened" to bring the number of medical card holders up to, at best, the levels from which they had fallen in the 1980s (about 30%), leaving at least 25% of the population with neither medical cards nor private health insurance. The discrimination that means that medical card holders wait twice as long as private patients for hospital treatment will not change. Medical cards for children would be "reviewed" and "focussed on" but not introduced.

The big idea for General Practice was GP co-operatives — GP's grouping together as opposed to working single-handedly. Unfortunately this has been the big idea in General Practice for more than 20 years and was no closer



to fruition at the launch of the strategy than it had been previously. There are no grounds for expecting significant progress even by the target date of 2003.

The increase of 3000 hospital beds was, poignantly enough, the same number of beds that Fianna Fail slashed in 1987 after running an election campaign under the slogan of "Health, Health, Health". It would not, however, be 3000 beds all at once. No, these beds would not be introduced until 2011! For 2002 there would be only 650 new beds. Within weeks even this more modest target had been rubbished. The Eastern Regional Health Authority (ERHA) helpfully offered to open 400 beds immediately, but, no sooner had the ink dried on their proposal than the Irish Nurses Organisation pointed out that, as there were over 1000 nursing vacancies (10% of posts) in the ERHA region, none of these beds would have the necessary staff. Their proposal collapsed.

The document contains many useful facts like: "The gap in life expectancy between Ireland and the EU is widening", "infant mortality rates are falling but are still higher than the EU" or "Poverty, unemployment, education, access to health services and environmental factors including housing and water quality all play important roles in determining the health of individuals. Disparities in health status within the population leads to consideration of the links between socio-economic factors and health". Consideration yes, action, sadly no. In the 'Action Plan' action number 18 promises: "implementation of *Homelessness: an integrated strategy to address the health and well being of homeless people*". The obvious solution of providing homes, so their needs are no different from anyone else, might be worth trying. Action number 25 on mental health recommends that the suicide prevention programme be intensified. How intensifying a programme will work when, according to professionals currently engaged in the programme, it is not reaching those at risk, is not mentioned.

Many of the recommendations are good ideas such as extending breast screening or a grant for two weeks respite care for older people. There is, however, no mention of where the staff or facilities to provide these services will come from. Impoverished Cuba, despite a rigid regime and 40 years of US economic blockade, has over four times as many doctors and nurses as Ireland (which has the lowest



Low pay and poor working conditions have led to staff shortages

number of doctors per capita in the EU).

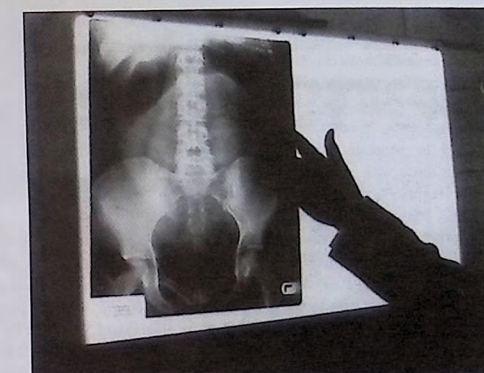
Following the strategy announcement in November not one newspaper headline was generated that was not so vague as to be indecipherable. Its complete inadequacy though became clear to many, particularly those who are in contact with the health services. Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, in a 2-page interview in the Sunday Business Post on 30/12/2001 (within weeks of the Health Strategy launch), covered areas such as crime, the economy, education, the general election and even the National Stadium, but failed to breathe a word about health never mind the much vaunted Health Strategy. By that time it was more of an embarrassment than something for the Taoiseach to boast about.

For me, the proof of the bankruptcy of the health strategy was summed up in a story on page 2 of *The Irish Times* of 13/12/01. The Health Strategy document's 218 recommendations includes number 32: "Entitlement to high quality treatment services for people with Hepatitis C infected by blood and blood products will be assured" but the story was of a state prosecuted court case in which "A 53 year old Co Mayo victim of the Hepatitis C scandal faces eviction from his local authority home in the New Year because of a £1400 debt which he cannot discharge until he receives long-delayed state compensation... For the past seven years he has depended for survival on a weekly disability payment (currently £85.50 per week) which he says is totally inadequate 'There are others living in acute hardship right around the country this Christmas' he said."

The immediate problem with the Strategy is that even if all of the action plans were followed through the health service infrastructure is not up to it. Massive increases in staff, buildings and other facilities will be needed. Most importantly, none of the changes needed to reverse the major social inequalities underlying health inequalities are to be addressed. It is the Irish working class who pay for the vast majority of health services through PAYE, PRSI and increasingly through private health insurance. The rich bosses we work for need us to be healthy enough to go to work but are not prepared to see their massive profits taxed to pay for it.

The response of the Labour Party has been woeful. We might have expected an attack on the government over its failure to provide staff and beds or its refusal to cut fees and prescription costs and to increase medical card eligibility, but it never came. Instead Labour presented "social

insurance" as a funding method as the solution to the health service's problems. This approach plays completely into the hands of the privatisers and neo-liberals who are just waiting for the opportunity to colonise health care services. It ignores the fact that Corporation Tax has fallen by over 20% in the last number of years and that the subsidising of private medicine by public money continues (11% of funding overall but 22% of admissions to public beds). It recommends a system that individualises the bill for health care which is a dangerous development because it moves away from the idea of health care as a common good. It is the first step towards privatisation. With the recent revelations that the private sector is being actively encouraged through tax breaks to build hospitals, and that companies are looking to get their hands on existing private beds in public hospitals, the threat of escalating health insurance costs and widespread privatisation is very real. Now more than ever the left must fight for a free, publicly funded health service not just in Ireland but in the face of neo-liberalism across the world.



In South Africa last year, thousands of AIDS activists forced 39 huge pharmaceutical companies to back down from a court case seeking to prevent the South African government from manufacturing antiretroviral and other anti-AIDS drugs cheaply. The campaign combined mass activism and street protests with a legal case designed to show how drug companies take massive profits from drugs largely developed through the funding of public bodies and the cooperation of public health systems and, vitally, tested on real human beings.

Paul Farmer in his excellent recent book *Infections and Inequalities* quotes a group of US scientists researching TB, AIDS and other diseases which predominantly afflict the poor. They criticise the US government's allocation of \$1.4 billion to researchers developing biological and chemical weapons:

"The proponents of anti-bioterrorism programmes have it backwards. Instead of pumping more money into ill-advised and risky bioterrorism programmes, we should build national and international public health systems that can adequately reduce, detect and respond to natural disease outbreaks and industrial chemical spills. Then, in the unlikely event of a bioterrorist attack, these systems will be available to manage the challenge."

The current international threat to health is not bioterrorism but brutal social inequality exacerbated by global economic recession. One part of the solution is the same — a decent public health system. The government whines about medical inflation and pay costs but the truth is they gave all our money to the super-rich in tax breaks and took bribes in return. Time to put an end to a sick system. How about a surgical strike?

The Business of Plays

Donal O'Kelly, writer, actor and chairperson of Calypso Productions, writes about the importance of radical plays and the difficulties of getting funding.

Back in 1993, I got together with a group of friends to put on a play I had written called *On The Wires*. Set mainly in El Salvador, it told the story of a guy from Derry who witnesses an air force bombing raid on a village and is set up by the US press attaché as an IRA gun-runner to the rebel FMLN. The recent arrest of three Irish republicans in Colombia bears uncanny resemblances to the plot. Out of that production in the City Arts Centre Calypso Productions grew, a company dedicated to producing new work that deals with issues of human rights and social inclusion. Plays and events we've produced since then include *Trickledown Town* (1994) about international debt told through the story of an Irish World Bank official in Jamaica; *The Business of Blood* about Chris Cole who disarmed a Hawk fighter jet bound for sale to Indonesia; *The Feile Failte*, a street parade and pageant welcoming ethnic diversity in Dublin; *Rosie And Starvans* by Charlie O'Neill, about racism against travellers told in the year of a Clare All-Ireland hurling triumph; *Farawayan* (1998) a site-specific promenade production about being unwelcome faraway from home; *Cell* by Paula Meehan (1999) about the dilemmas facing women prisoners in our jails; *The Asylum Ball* by Gavin Kostick (2000) about treatment of people with mental illness; and *Guess Who's Coming For The Dinner* by Roddy Doyle (2001) about racist attitudes in Ireland to African asylum-seekers.

Along with each production, we produce an information pack about the issues dealt with in the play, and we trigger spin-off media interest in an issue.

We are currently preparing for a national tour of Roddy Doyle's hit play, *Guess Who's Coming For The Dinner*, directed by Calypso's artistic director Bairbre Ni Chaoimh. One of the touring venues will be Mosney, which now houses five hundred asylum-seekers under the Department of Justice's cruelly misguided Direct Provision and Dispersal Policy. That should be an interesting night at the theatre.

It all seems very far from the gushy enthusiasm of eight years ago in the City Arts Centre. It hasn't all been plain sailing. In fact, looking back, each production had its own particular obstacles to be overcome to get it off the ground. Apart from the obvious difficulty of 'how the hell do I make gripping theatre out of this?' Well, that's an artistic challenge, so you make a virtue out of necessity and get on with it. But raising money – that's another story.

Producing issue-based theatre isn't easy. Getting basic funding can be very tricky. In Calypso, we've been on annual funding from the Arts Council for the past six years. But most of the actual costs of putting on a production – which can be anything from €50,000 to €120,000 – have to be sourced elsewhere. Sometimes that's achievable if the issue we're dealing with coincides with the budget line of a large organisation. For example, *Rosie And Starvans* was staged during European Year Against Racism. But sometimes it isn't that easy. *The Asylum Ball*, about mental illness, could have been funded twice over if

we'd taken sponsorship from pharmaceutical companies, but we took a principled decision not to do that. Many Non-Governmental Organisations have been supportive of our work on a project-to-project basis, depending on whether we're covering issues they deal with. Sometimes it's like a business gamble, and in Calypso we've had some sleepless nights wondering where the rest of the budget was going to come from. Some would say that's free market economics, stop moaning, plan better and get on with it. But it's not that simple.

In our work, we build up alliances and relationships with people we meet in the course of a project. We feel a commitment to keep that going, and not just move on to the next issue like trouble nomads. For example, as a result of doing *The Asylum Ball*, we now run weekly Snoezelen Room poetry, readings and song events in St. Brendan's Mental Hospital and the Central Mental Hospital Dundrum. And the issue of racism is one we feel a strong resolve to return to again and again as we see its manifestations in different ways from year to year.

Keeping all of this going requires security and space to plan ahead. That's what makes Arts Council funding so essential. If it's guaranteed for a foreseeable period – say three years – then it's possible to map out a future and plan growth. If not, then it means staying in the play-to-play scramble, living off our wits to escape with a no-loss audit each year.

So how does one go about this fragile business of garnering sustained Arts Council funding? It's all in the directives, I hear someone shout. But hear me please: the directives keep changing. And, please, if we were to spend all our time reading and understanding and adapting to the changing directives, we'd never have time to make theatre.

When a new Arts Council is appointed (often by a new minister who has been talked up by interested parties when cruising the openings and award dinners as opposition spokesperson) a sea change happens. Those of us depending to a crucial degree on Arts Council funding are thrown into a ball-gazing frenzy. We read the leaves. We look for coloured smoke. What do they want? Very often, it's a case of figuring out how to say what you want to do. Say it the wrong way, and you won't get funding. Say it the right way, and you will. It's the same thing you intend to do, but you have to say it right.

This phenomenon of artists being required to turn into bureaucrats has a parallel in the human rights and social justice sector. When I was on the board of the justice and peace organisation Airl a few years ago, we, along with many other organisations, spent an enormous amount of time and energy going through a horrendous rigmarole to apply for funding from the European Social Affairs Commission. All we got was an education in how ridiculous it is for people who are highly motivated and skilled in a particular area to be cornered into doing for a very long time what they're not good at – filling out Kafkaesque funding application tomes.

Give me a play to write any day. Any subject. Any length. Any location. Any number of characters. Anything but another funding application.

Donal O'Kelly



Film Lord of the Rings

Dir: Peter Jackson

Now showing at selected cinemas



The long awaited film version of JRR Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* opened in cinemas at the end of December. *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the first episode of this massive production, will be followed by *The Two Towers* and *The Return of the King* at the end of this year and next year respectively, although all three episodes have already been shot. The entire production runs to about ten hours and cost \$210 million. It is, by any standards, one of the biggest cinematic extravaganzas in movie history.

The epic scale of the film follows that of the original work itself. *The Lord of the Rings* was a key episode in a full-scale alternative universe and history that Tolkien created complete with its own languages, races, cultures and detailed geography.

The Ring of Power forged by Sauron, the Dark Lord, has fallen into the hands of Hobbits, simple but good-natured little people from the quiet land of the shire. The Ring must be destroyed in the volcanic fires where it was forged lest the Dark Lord should recapture it and use it to overrun all of "middle earth". Frodo Baggins, the hobbit, along with other representatives of the free peoples, Men, Dwarves, Elves and the Wizard Gandalf are given the task of destroying the Ring. In their journey to destroy it they are pursued on all sides by the servants of Sauron, who include the Ringwraiths, Orcs, Goblins, Trolls and other assorted evil creatures.

If you are a fan of this kind of thing, and particularly of Tolkien's books (which I am), the film won't disappoint. In general it is very true to the spirit of the original book. The dramatic landscapes, epic battles and terrifying pursuits are rendered brilliantly using a combination of breathtaking digital animation, costume design and on-location photography in Peter Jackson's native New Zealand. From the Tolkienist's point of view the most disappointing thing about the film is that you will have to wait a full year before the next episode. However, for others not familiar with Tolkien or the fantasy

genre of which Tolkien is the undisputed king, the hype around the film might seem difficult to understand and even harder to credit. Socialists might also be highly critical of a book and film that seem to glorify and romanticise a pre-industrial past.

Certainly, there would be an element of truth in such a view. Tolkien was very much the conservative English gentleman. The shire is a thinly veiled idealisation of the English countryside that Tolkien saw as threatened by the dark forces of industrialisation and modernisation. Tolkien, an Oxford Professor of Anglo-Saxon, drew heavily on his knowledge of Anglo-Saxon and Nordic mythology and language in constructing the world and peoples of middle earth. In doing so he romanticised a world of kings and feudal mythology and implicitly condemned all ideas of modernisation and social progress.

However, it would be inadequate to simply condemn the book or the film as reactionary nonsense. Tolkien provides a classic example of what Lukacs called 'romantic anti-capitalism'. His work looks backwards to a romanticised pre-capitalist past to shield him from the horror of the present. Yet in doing so, he does tap into a more widespread – and not necessarily reactionary – rejection of the horrors of twentieth century. It is no coincidence that *The Lord of the Rings* went from relative obscurity to becoming a cult classic for millions of young people at the end of the 1960s. It was at a time when millions of young people were rejecting the world they saw around them and looking for alternatives.

In this sense *The Lord of the Rings* is escapism pure and simple. It offers a temporary escape into an obviously fictional universe where good can triumph over evil. Of course, politically this is completely inadequate. But neither the book nor the film has any pretensions to being a political manifesto.

Richard Boyd Barrett

Film Kandahar Director: Moshen Makhmalbaf



women's imprisonment. As the film begins we see dozens of little girls being prepared for a trip across the Iranian border into Afghanistan, where they are told that they will no longer be able to attend schools. On the other side of the border, young boys attend hellish religious/military schools controlled by the Taliban that teach them to become child-soldiers and killers.

Kandahar shows an already poor society shattered by two decades of fighting and suggests that this devastation allowed forces such as the Taliban to rise. The film focuses in particular on the mutilation caused by land mines and in one of the film's most striking sequences, an army of one-legged men race across the desert on crutches when a Red Cross plane drops artificial limbs by parachute.

Nobody watching the film could possibly see how carpet bombing one of the world's poorest countries is any solution to the complex problems that engulf it. While many reviews have attempted to claim that this film justifies the US massacre in Afghanistan, both Makhmalbaf and Pazira have come out strongly against the bombing. In a recent interview Pazira said: 'In the 1980s they supported these guerrillas. Ronald Reagan referred to them as the equivalent of the Founding Fathers. They gave them incredible support while knowing that they were religious fanatics. Now we are told that bombing is the only answer. This is quite simply wrong. The Taliban were created by the Pakistani intelligence services and money from Saudi Arabia. You don't grow weapons in the ground, you have to buy them from somewhere... We are bombing a people who already have 10 million unexploded bombs under their feet in the form of landmines. The politicians in the West are making a terrible mistake.'

Sinead Kennedy

Iranian director Moshen Makhmalbaf's latest film, *Kandahar*, has achieved an extraordinary currency of popularity in the light of the US-led war against Afghanistan. It has been a huge success in every country in which it has been shown and won the Ecumenical prize at the Cannes film festival. Even George Bush requested a screening but don't let that put you off, this is a beautiful and passionately observed film that depicts the horror of life in Afghanistan. Unlike Bush, Makhmalbaf's concern for the people of Afghanistan goes back to at least 1987 with his film *The Cyclist*, which featured Afghan refugees in Iran.

Set in 1999, *Kandahar* is based on the true story of an Afghan woman Nelofer Pazira (Nafas in the film) who escaped the Taliban and fled to Canada to become a journalist. She tries to re-enter Afghanistan to save a despairing friend (her sister, for the movie) who has threatened suicide because she can no longer tolerate life under the Taliban. Nafas travels from the Iranian border with a series of guides towards Kandahar. Her four guides – an old Afghan refugee, a young boy, Khak, expelled from a madrasa (religious school), a black American convert to Islam and a one-armed landmine victim – each represent a different vision of the horror of life under Taliban rule.

Khak is played by 12-year-old Sadou Teymouri whose father was killed in the war. In real life Sadou supports his mother and five siblings by foraging in the desert and selling dates across the border in Afghanistan. A disillusioned American convert to the mujahideen cause is played by Hassan Tantai, a black Muslim who travelled from the States in 1979 to fight with the Afghans against the Russian invaders.

The film has a poetic feel. In portraying the cramping of women's lives, forced to cover themselves completely in the burqa, Makhmalbaf uses its veiled windows to symbolise

REVIEWS - BOOKS

The New Intifada: Resisting Israel's Apartheid

Roane Carey ed,
Verso,
€20, £13 stg

THE NEW INTIFADA



To understand why thousands of Palestinians have risked their lives to challenge the might of the Israeli state read *The New Intifada: Resisting Israel's Apartheid*. It brings together many of the best writers who oppose Israel's brutal repression of the Palestinian people.

Noam Chomsky, a longstanding critic of US and Israeli policy, provides an excellent introduction. He exposes the bloody role of the US in Israel and the Middle East. The US backs repressive regimes in the Middle East, including Israel, because of the huge supplies of oil in the region guaranteeing "profit flow and a lever of world control".

Edward Said, the Palestinian writer, dissects the myths of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. This process, presented in the media as the Palestinians' only chance for a homeland, was a con from the start. The US and Israel claimed they were offering Palestinians 90% of the West Bank. They really meant 50% split into separated areas. Israel has illegally occupied the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem since 1967.

The book contains an account of a revelatory journey through the West Bank by Egyptian writer Ahdaf Soueif. Robert Fisk, *The London Independent* journalist, describes the horror of the slaughter of 2,000 Palestinian refugees in the camps of Sabra and Shatilla in 1982. Ariel Sharon, the Israeli defence minister of the time, was found "personally responsible" for the massacre by an Israeli commission. Sharon is now the Israeli prime minister.

Arab women writers have powerful pieces in this book. A chilling interview with Dr Azmi Bishara, a Palestinian member of the Israeli parliament, is a searing indictment of Zionism's racist treatment of Israel's 1 million Palestinians who are Israeli citizens. Their solidarity with the intifada provoked Israeli mobs who went on the rampage, looting

and burning Arab properties, wounding hundreds of Arabs and killing 13 of them.

The writings of teenagers in different refugee camps and occupied towns are the most moving part of the book. "I want to return to Palestine to have a land and an identity. Then nobody would dare mock me and say I am a refugee," says Farah Obeid, a 14 year old in the Shatilla refugee camp who is abused at school because she is a Palestinian.

The one weakness with this otherwise excellent book is that, while one essay attempts to explore the problems with the Palestinian strategy in the intifada, it fails overall to prioritise the fundamental problem the Palestinians face. It was only pressure from the Palestinian people that forced Arafat to reject the US/Israeli deal in the first place. Arafat has now bowed to Israeli pressure by ordering his security forces to arrest dozens of suspected militants. Groups like Hamas have seen their popularity rise over the last year as they have challenged Israel and Arafat's policies but they can offer no solution.

The key problem is that so far, the Arab regimes have successfully isolated the intifada - despite the overwhelming feelings of fury and solidarity felt by the region's 200 million Arabs. The secular left has to drive home the argument that the Palestinians cannot win a decisive victory without the full-scale popular mobilisation of these sentiments. That would offer a force strong enough to beat the Israeli state and its imperialist backers.

The book ends with a call to build a worldwide mass grassroots campaign to challenge the racism of the US and Israeli states. The book is a fine contribution to arming that campaign with insight and information. Read it and get angry, and active.

Simon Basketter

In 1989 George Bush declared a New World Order and a new era of peace and prosperity. The truth, of course, turned out to be almost the complete opposite. The last ten years have seen wars in the Gulf, the Balkans and most recently Afghanistan.

John Rees, in the latest issue of *International Socialism*, sets out to explain why all the predictions were so wrong. Rees explains that alongside a massive increase in international trade, finance and production - what is referred to as globalisation - states have become more important not less. In defiance of the official ideology, US Federal Reserve stepped in to rescue Savings and Loan from collapse during the last recession. Today the Bush administration has rushed to prop up the US airline industry.

Even the growing importance of apparently supra-national bodies like the WTO, IMF or NATO bear witness to the domination of the major western states, particularly the US. Crucially, their role has been about controlling the process of globalisation in the interests of western and US capital.

In many of the regions of the world that have been the victims of neo-liberal globalisation, globalisation has served to give force to various forms of nationalism both secular and religious, particularly Islam. The other face of globalisation, as Rees explains in some detail, is increased militarisation and war. Now in a recession, the US has to increasingly rely on projecting its superior military power. However its ability to impose its will through military force is not unlimited. The US now has to pull together an international coalition to support its actions in Afghanistan even though its allies are inherently unstable. The Arab-Israeli conflict has worsened and India and Pakistan have come to the brink of war. Significantly, its bombing

campaign in Afghanistan triggered very substantial anti-war protests across the world, made stronger by the previous existence of an international anti-capitalist movement.

In developing his analysis, Rees draws on the classical Marxist theory of imperialism developed by Lenin and Bukharin before World War One. Rees explains that the value of their theory was to highlight the two contradictory tendencies in the development of capitalism. On the one hand, capital inside particular states quickly outgrows national boundaries leading to the growth of international trade, finance and production between states; on the other, the centralisation of capital leads to a greater intertwining between major blocs of capital and the particular state in which they are based. World War One and social revolution was the outcome of this contradiction.

Capitalism produces war by its very nature but also produces an international working class that resists. Globalisation, the immiseration of millions across the globe, the push towards war and the growth of various forms of resistance in the last ten years show that this analysis retains all its force. Anti-imperialism, John Rees concludes, is as important for the left as it ever was and, crucially, the task of carrying through the fight against capitalism falls to an ever-growing international working class - the other side of the horrors of capitalist globalisation.

Other articles in this issue of *International Socialism* are on *The Long Torment of Afghanistan* (by Jonathan Neale, who visited Dublin recently) and *The new world recession* (by Chris Harman).

Colm O Riain

Revolutionary Portraits Series, Rembrandt and Revolution, John Molyneux

Diego Rivera: the Man Who Painted Walls, Mike Gonzalez (Redwords Pack of four with Mozart and John Coltrane €19.05)



Rembrandt and Diego Rivera are the visual artists who complete the line-up of heavyweights that feature in the 'Revolutionary Portraits' series from Redwords. These excellent new paperbacks are ideal as an introduction to, or as further reading on, any of the artists featured (these include music legends Mozart and John Coltrane).

There is something that makes these studies different to the multitude of texts that already exists and that is the way in which the authors have not abstracted the artists or their work from the social and political history to which they belong. Any reader familiar with the territory of art history or art criticism will testify to this distinction, as within the art world there is a conscious effort to divorce all art production from the realm which contains politics, or real social content for that matter. They would rather exalt it to a sphere of the phenomenon, of being a creation that transcends time.

Each of the writers chip away at what is usually held up as the sanctity of genius and begin a demystification process which only makes the work of these great talents more accessible once it has been freed from the turgid world of artspeak. When a work of art is viewed with a comprehensive understanding of the environment and conditions in which it was produced, as these books do, the work is enabled to translate to an audience beyond the limitations set for it by conventional art history.

In *Rembrandt and Revolution*, John Molyneux passionately introduces us to Rembrandt van Rijn, citizen of the newly formed Dutch Republic during the 17th century. This book is unashamedly full of the writer's admiration for the painter and when we finish the text I believe we are won over to his passion for the artist. Why consider Rembrandt a revolutionary asks Molyneux. He responds by calling us to simply look to the work that he created. He insists that his work is evocative of the unique historical period that gave rise to the particular society that Rembrandt was born into. This period in history was revolutionary and was responsible for the creation of the first ever bourgeois society, which in turn heralded the beginning of the end of 1,000 years of European feudalism. Molyneux connects the fundamental changed nature of the social order to the work that Rembrandt created at this time. Within it there were elements that could not have been discovered or portrayed in such a way in any

Two new books eagerly awaited by anyone interested in Irish literature may not appear at first to be relevant in the age of the Celtic Tiger. But it is too easy to regard McGahern and Kavanagh as writing about a world long gone or a backwater that has no relevance today. Their backgrounds are similar, the border counties of Leitrim and Monaghan, and this landscape dominates most of their work.

John McGahern's *That They May Face the Rising Sun* is not easy to categorise. At its simplest it is the story of Joe and Mary Rutledge who move from London to Ireland in search of a different life. This is not in any sense a big novel, it is about relationships between people and places. McGahern's use of language means that what is not said is often more important than what is. His characters have hardly changed from one generation to the next, but the world has changed around them and it is unlikely that the next generation will grow old in the same way as them.

Both McGahern and Kavanagh share a concern for those who plough 'the stony grey soil', but this is a secondary consideration. Both offer more than social comment: they write about a world in transition while maintaining a sense of ordinary life going on about them.

Antoinette Quinn's new biography of Kavanagh portrays him warts and all. He was an unpleasant man - vain, cantankerous and frustrated. But he stood

against the tide of a depressing post-war Ireland plagued by economic depression, unemployment and emigration. A narrow, censorious morality forced the best to flee abroad and it was left to Kavanagh to speak out for those who remained. In his lifetime he was perhaps the finest Irish poet since Yeats, though not all his work stands the test of time. He still has something to say if we care to listen. His masterpiece was *The Great Hunger* (1942) which recounts his journey from childhood to manhood and from the field to the city. He was equally at home in an urban landscape. His tribute to Jim Larkin (1947) can stand comparison with any of its time.

And Tyranny trampled them in Dublin's gutter
Until Jim Larkin came along and cried
The call of Freedom and the call of Pride
And Slavery crept to its hands and knees
And Nineteen Thirteen cheered from out the utter
Degradation of their miseries.

Kavanagh and McGahern's writings are free of pretence. They have both an innocence and a truth which is rare enough in any age, especially ours, and that makes them worth reading.

Paul O'Brien

previous time.

For example, his portrayal of women was radically different from the way they had and were being depicted. In 'The Toilet of Bathsheba' (1594) Rembrandt endows the woman with all the human qualities usually reserved for men, in other words she is allowed the imperfection of a lived experience. His emphasis on her hands, on her feet (the bits which would be the really unnecessary bodily parts if he were depicting Bathsheba as a mere sexualised object), is an indication of how Rembrandt viewed the women in his society. They were individuals that he had real human relationships with and this is what he chose to convey in his work.

Mike Gonzalez's *The Man Who Painted Walls* has a similar objective. What is strikingly different in his work however is the tone of the author's treatment of his subject. We find that Gonzalez is openly critical of some aspects of Diego Rivera's work. It is not however a complete assassination of the man's political or artistic convictions but more of an honest appraisal of the situation and conditions in which these works were produced. But by examining Rivera's work in the context of revolutionary Mexico these criticisms have a resonance for any revolutionary today.

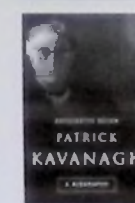
Of course it is fantastic that emblazoned on public spaces in Mexico and in the U.S. (Detroit) there are images celebrating ordinary peoples lives and symbols of the struggles of those people, not to mention the inclusion of portraits of Lenin and Marx. But Gonzalez insists on looking at these murals more closely. The peasants and workers in these murals are not endowed with a power to shape and direct their world. We are offered a depiction of an historical narrative that had been urged on by a handful of great individuals but that lacks any sense of a collective struggle. This weakness Gonzalez locates within Rivera's own political weakness.

But the Gonzalez work still manages to challenge anyone who looks to artists to perform a revolutionary task in art purely in a political sense. It proves that prescribing for a political aim a style or content can effect and damage the work and inhibit what an artist may try to convey to his or her audience.

Ann Ryan

That they May Face the Rising Sun,
John McGahern,
Faber and Faber,
€22.34. £16.99 stg

Patrick Kavanagh: A Biography
Antoinette Quinn,
Gill and Macmillan,
€31.74. £25 stg



Eamonn McCann

Coalition Calling...

Ruairi Quinn found himself embroiled in a small controversy before Xmas when it was revealed he'd told a Labour Party gathering that his main objective in 2002 would be "to get the bastards out". The bastards he had in mind were Fianna Fail. Wasn't it desperate that a party leader should call members of another party "bastards", super-sensitive sorts wailed.

Actually, one was reminded of the wise words of the late Brendan Behan who deprecated the use of "bastards" in this context, recommending "dastards" as a substitute on the grounds that 'nobody can help being a bastard. but to be a dastard you have to work at it'.

Apart from Quinn's inappropriate word selection, then, the controversy was a load of old bollards. But it did raise the question of whether Labour could share office again with Fianna Fail. The point was put to Quinn in an RTE interview: since you say so strongly it's your number one priority to get Fianna Fail out, presumably you won't be forming a coalition to keep Fianna Fail in?

Ah now, replied Quinn, that's far too "simplistic". Labour had already decided at its 2001 conference to leave the question of coalition open until after the election. He couldn't override that.

But no doubt, given the sharpness of the language he'd used, Quinn would himself, personally, be opposed to any deal which kept the Fianna Fail bastards in office? No. That, too, was "simplistic". His own preference wasn't the point. The party membership had a right to consider its options in the light of the electoral arithmetic produced by the poll.

In other words, if a Fianna Fail-Labour coalition emerges as a viable option, Quinn's snout will be in the trough before anyone can shout "traitor!".

It has ever been thus. No leader of Irish Labour has ever campaigned prior to an election for coalition with either Fianna Fail or Fine Gael. None has ever refused to form a coalition with either party when the offer was made afterwards. Quinn's current manoeuvring is a traditional ritual performed by Labour leaders prior to the ceremonial ditching of any leftist commitments made for vote-gathering purposes when in opposition.

If Labour has been around this course more times than loyal rank-and-filers might care to think about, Sinn Fein is relatively new to the circuit. On the hustings, Sinn Fein strives to out-do Labour in the vehemence of its denunciations of Fianna Fail. Gerry Adams is on record that Sinn Fein would find Fianna Fail "very uncomfortable bed-fellows", on account of bribery, brown envelopes and sleazy policies to make the rich richer.

So that rules out a Fianna Fail-Sinn Fein coalition? No, as Adams explained on Radio One's "World This Weekend". The party had voted at its 2001 conference to leave the question of coalition open until after the election. He couldn't preempt the decision. And wasn't it all premature anyway until we knew the make-up of the next Dail?

The Sinn Fein leadership's readiness for partnership with Fianna Fail was clear in a speech by Martin Ferris



in Monaghan in early January, in which he complained about a suggestion from Ahern that Sinn Fein might not yet be a suitable government partner. How dare he, stormed Ferris. Sinn Fein was perfectly qualified to join Fianna Fail in office.

Both Labour and Sinn Fein also contain voices saying that, even if the leadership is contemplating coalition, they personally couldn't stomach it. The anti-coalitionists may be sincere. But this hardly matters, since they all spell it out that if their party does opt for coalition with Fianna Fail, they'll choke back their revulsion and accept the majority view. Their presence can currently be used to reassure left-wingers that there's space for socialists within the party. At the same time, their presence poses no threat to the planned propping-up of a right-wing dominated government. Thus, the two parties have arrived at remarkably similar approaches to coalition, despite coming from the very different political traditions of moderate social democracy and militant nationalism. This happens because of a fundamentally similar way in which social democracy and nationalism see politics.

Both claim to base themselves on the interests of "society as a whole" – or "the national interest". They condemn conspicuous opulence and express dismay at dire poverty in contemporary Irish society because these aspects of life injure "society as a whole". Quinn has said – although it might easily have been Adams – that "it is in the interests of all layers in society to eliminate poverty".

But it's not. In the end, the elimination of poverty is not in the interests of the rich. Poverty arises from the fact that the dynamic of capitalism is provided by greed, not by need, and it simultaneously generates great wealth and deep deprivation.

When class division is the defining characteristic of the political arena, to refer to "the interests of society as a whole", or to "the national interest", is merely to refer to the interests of the class which is in control.

It is because Labour and Sinn Fein are parties of class collaboration that both are set to coalesce with Fianna Fail if the spread of seats makes this possible. To campaign for either of these parties is to help keep Fianna Fail in office.